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WOMEN IN THE UNION

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to  
the memory of Penny Mead,  
sister and friend

### ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the position of women at work and in trade unions. The study focusses on a large electrical engineering company employing mainly women workers and examines how they fared in relation to the union at workplace and branch level.

Developing an understanding of the problems the women workers faced through detailed study of the employer's production strategies, it becomes clear that these issues do not appear in the collective bargaining framework. Despite the women's numerical superiority, the grievance procedure at higher levels was dominated by the male workers' problems and formal agreements consistently reflected their interests over and above those of the women. Most of the key positions in the local organisation were held by men and male workers were over-represented in the shop steward system.

Arguments are advanced to explain this which go beyond the usual explanations of women's distinctive (and historically sustained) patterns of union representation and involvement. Reconsidering the industrial relations orthodoxy, it is proposed that inequalities in bargaining strength and resources of men and women workers may be reinforced by the process and distributive effects of collective bargaining.

This is shown through detailed empirical study of members' problems and responses and shop stewards' grievance handling on the shopfloor. Disputes involving men and women workers are examined and the way negotiations were developed and concluded on issues such as pay, discipline, and movement of labour are analysed.

The conclusion is reached that collective bargaining has implications which are significant not only for the position of women workers in the workplace and union, but the shape and responsiveness of the institution's representational and bargaining structures as a whole



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### Introduction

This study is concerned with exploring the problem of women's low levels of participation and involvement in trade unions.

In the 1970s this long-standing question had apparently out-lived its twin - their low levels of membership and difficulty of recruitment. Indeed, the dramatic growth of female unionisation - in some sectors especially - now highlighted a persistent and seemingly anachronistic pattern of women's under-representation at every level of union's organisational structure.

During the 1980s, in the face of a falling membership in general, the problems of recruitment are, again, being reposed for trade unions. But perhaps in respect of women, this can no longer be seen simply as a prior question to that of their "involvement". While the issue of women's participation was raised in the first instance, as a result of an obvious failure in terms of union policy to address their needs and interests, many unions discovered that to attempt to do so was the secret of recruitment and growth. (e.g. in banking, see Heritage (1983)). But the big question still remains for working women: with what effect?

Table (i) Unions with largest increases in women's membership

	1968 OOOs	1980 OOOs	Increase OOOs	Per cent Increase
NUPE	136.0	461.2	325.2	239
NALGO	132.1	355.8	223.7	169
TGWU	194.7	342.8	148.1	76
USDAW	155.6	290.3	134.7	86
GMWU	199.9	328.2	128.3	64
COHSE	38.9	164.5	125.6	323
ASTMS	9.4	85.9	76.5	813
AUEW (Eng)	97.4	165.0	67.6	69
CPSA	100.0	160.0	60.0	60
APEX	38.7	85.1	46.4	119
BIFU	32.6	64.0	31.4	96

Source: TUC Statistics

Table (ii) Women in the unions

Figures in brackets show how many women there would be if they were represented according to their share of the membership.

Union	Total OOOs	F OOOs	%F	Executive Members		Full-time Officials		TUC Delegates	
				Total	F	Total	F	Total	F
APEX (Professional Executive Clerical, Computer)	150	77	51	15	1(8)	55	2(28)	15	4(8)
ASTMS (Technical, Managerial)	472	82	17	24	2(4)	63	6(11)	30	3(5)
BIFU (Banking, Insurance Finance)	132	64	49	27	3(13)	41	6(20)	20	3(10)
GMWU (General & Municipal)	956	327	34	33	0(11)	243	13(83)	73	3(25)
NALGO (Local Govt Officers)	705	356	50	70	14(35)	165	11(83)	72	15(36)
NUPE (Public Employees)	700	470	67	26	8(17)	150	7(101)	32	10(22)
NUT (Teachers)	258	170	66	44	4(29)	110	17(73)	36	7(24)
NU TGW (Tailor & Garment)	117	108	92	15	5(14)	47	9(43)	17	7(16)
TGWU (Transport & General)	2070	330	16	39	0(6)	600	9(96)	85	6(14)
USDAW (Shop, Distributive Allied)	462	281	63	16	3(10)	162	13(102)	38	8(24)
TOTALS	6022	2265	38	309	40(147)	1636	90(640)	418	66(174)

All figures are approximate and the most recent that were available in November 1980.

Source: Coote and Kellner (1980)

Over three-quarters of women working full-time in manual jobs are still being paid less than the two-thirds of average-male-manual-earnings figure taken to define low pay. In 1982 just two equal pay cases heard by tribunals were successful (only 39 applications had been made). Women's pay relative to men's ceased to improve two years after the implementation of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts in 1975 and has since fallen back to nearly the same level it was then, despite our legendarily 'strong' trade union movement. The position in the UK is almost the worst in Europe; of all EEC countries only Eire and Luxembourg show a greater inequality between men and women's earnings.

On questions of women's pay at least, trade unions have consistently stated a preference for collective bargaining over legal enactment:

"We have always taken the view that the best means to achieve equal pay is through collective bargaining and that the law shall only be used as a last resort when all else has failed."

GMWU (1977) quoted in Beale (1982) p.69

But collective bargaining appears to have failed as well.

To the growing body of women members active in their unions, it seemed they had had a lot more impact on their organisation's policies than these were having on their position in employment (Coote and Campbell (1982) and EOC (1983) pp.22-35). Even on such a 'commonplace' issue as maternity rights, for instance, fewer than half of the workplaces in a survey conducted via trade unions in 1983 reported having a negotiated agreement. (LRD (1983))

The problems of policy implementation have kept the question of women's under-representation in, and men's domination of, trade unions' decision-making structures firmly on the agenda. And the emergent 'gap' between union policies and bargaining practices has begun to pose this even more sharply. Equal Pay was contradicted by negotiated improvements in differentials and the 'bread-winners' wage; job security, by agreements that part-timers (frequently in the same union) should 'go first'; and equal opportunities - by numerous union-backed work rules. (Campbell & Charlton (1978) and Ellis (1981) p.41). Policies to help workers with family responsibilities have given way in the face of men bargaining as, and for, breadwinners rather than fathers; and commitment to women's equality in general is denied by pin-ups in trade union offices and journals.



These contradictions have lent force to the view that there should be more women office-holders in trade unions to ensure that women's voices are heard and their interests represented. Indeed positive action measures to increase women's involvement generally have gathered momentum in the movement as a whole. Arguments for these have been informed by the women members' experiences and their insistence on union platforms that the problems be addressed. They have also been backed up by investigations to identify the 'main barriers to participation' such as that carried out by Jane Stageman (and a number of individual unions themselves e.g. NALGO).

While the picture of the obstacles which emerges from these studies is complex, most heavily stressed are the problems arising from women's domestic role and socialisation (lack of confidence etc); in the light of which, institutional features (such as inconveniently arranged meetings, hierarchy, jargon, rules and procedures) and male dominance are seen as particularly problematic.

The significance of women's domestic role in shaping their trade union involvement can scarcely be denied. It is reflected statistically in surveys which show for example that in 1980 one man in two, aged 25-34 had a full-time job and belonged to a union - compared with one woman in 20 in the same age range (Coote & Kellner (1980) p.30). And it is expressed in demands for child-care facilities at union meetings and conferences, and for 'our brothers' to take their proper share of responsibility in the home.

The extent to which institutional features shape women's involvement in trade unions - independently, even, of these domestic commitments - is a question only more recently recognised. "For most women", Be

Campbell comments "trade unions meet at the wrong time in the wrong place about the wrong things"; which-she might well have added - they deal with in "the wrong way". That the process of making trade union organisations more accessible and accountable to women involves changing not only 'what', 'where', 'when' and 'why', but also, crucially, 'how' things are done, clearly has implications which extend beyond this section of the membership alone. In the course of realising that it is not just a question of 'slotting women into the machinery' but of transforming it, women trade unionists have been drawing on ideas and experience of democratic organisation and participative practice developed in the women's liberation movement. (See Stageman (1980), Beale (1982), Rowbotham (1979).)

From this source too is derived a greater awareness of the degree to which male domination of union structures shapes women's participation within these. In contrast to other questions, the implications of men's sexism are only just beginning to be addressed - and gingerly so:

"Some of the issues (...) have been discussed for some time - the problems of domestic commitments and meeting times, for example. But the points about male attitudes and women feeling intimidated have generally been swept under the carpet. Are they too dangerous? Will men be upset? They are real barriers to equality and need to be brought out into the open. It is important to listen to what women have to say about their own experiences."

Beale (1982) p.23.

Women in trade unions have begun to look more carefully at the old 'explanation': - "women lack confidence". They have begun to ask - if/when men predominate, how does this affect women's (or anyone's) ability to participate? Is it just a matter of 'confidence'? Or are there particular obstacles facing women when they attempt to put their points across? Writers such as Dale Spender have opened up

fruitful avenues of discussion about men and women's different styles of communication which trade unionists of both sexes who are concerned with increasing participation and democracy in their organisations are finding useful; and the topic is, increasingly, incorporated into union education courses. (See Spender (1980) and Rowbotham (1979)).

We can see, therefore, that a number of problem areas are beginning to be opened up around the question of women's continuing low levels of participation and involvement in trade unions, partly because of the consequences which we have identified. There are, all too often, contradictions between union policies and bargaining practices in relation to women, and there is a general and continuing low priority accorded to their particular needs and interests. Despite their overwhelming numerical dominance/ <sup>in some unions,</sup> women hold few decision-making positions in the organisational structures and this is seen as both cause and consequence of trade unions' lack of effectiveness in bargaining on behalf of their female membership.

However, the question of women's under-representation has mostly been addressed at levels of the organisation above the workplace. And, even here, changes in the machinery - such as reserved seats or special committees - have often been focussed on the upper echelons of the structure (where those involved have, of course, often been faced with considerable problems of isolation). The need to underpin these positions right down to the local level has been recognised as necessary for this representation to be both responsive and accountable and therefore effective. Thus, it is the problem of women's involvement at branch and workplace level which is ultimately the most crucial. And, in order to explain how the patterns of representation and involvement are generated in the first place and therefore threaten to persist, it is the level at which analysis has to begin.

To the extent that many activists (men or women) in local trade union branches are, or have been, shopstewards or representatives at their place of work - this is where the pattern of involvement and representation in the organisational structure is first formed. But what shapes it? The question is made much more complex at workplace level because of the need to take account of the labour process. And, since we are also particularly interested in examining gender relationships, we need to see how these are constructed at this level as well - and, more importantly, with what effect.

The significance of job structure for trade union involvement is generally recognised, but little explored. As Valerie Ellis points out:

"Low participation in trade unions is not a phenomenon restricted to women (...) Some groups of workers have a higher degree of participation and influence within unions than others. For example, from all the evidence available it would appear that skilled workers tend to be better organised, more involved, and more influential within unions than the less skilled."

Ellis (1981) p.19.

But we need to ask why? How? And, again - with what effect?

She concludes that:

"Insofar as women tend to be concentrated in the less skilled jobs that, rather than gender, may be at least part of the explanation of their lower degree of participation."

ibid p.19

But surely we need to ask why workers in less skilled jobs have less involvement and influence and why it is that women fill these positions? Without doing so, the above is no explanation at all - simply a description, and the argument is tautological. It is clear to

us that, since gender divisions are as crucial in terms of job segregation as they are for trade union participation/representation, it is essential to consider how they are all linked.

As Veronica Beechey has noted:

"Occupational segregation is a very important structural characteristic of women's work in contemporary Britain (...) and a major reason why the Equal Pay Act has proved virtually useless in rectifying inequalities between men and women. It seems likely too that occupational segregation has had a major impact on women's relationship to trade unions, but very little work has been done on this to date."

Beechey (1983) p.40

This relationship is, moreover, a highly complex one, since it is apparent that job structures are not only determining - in terms of uneven patterns of union involvement and influence - but also, to a degree, determined by these as well.

"Insofar as workers are acting defensively against the threat of substitution and competition, their most effective tactic is to differentiate themselves from potential competitors. Such protection through differentiation may be provided by various systems, from union organised apprenticeship schemes to promotion lines based on strict seniority provisions."  
Rubery (1978) p.260.

Thus:

"Worker organisation has been shown to have played an important part in developing and shaping structured labour markets, but its own development has been determined, in its turn, by changes in the employment structure."

ibid p.268

#### THE STUDY

This study is a detailed investigation of union organisation and collective bargaining in a large company (BSR) where the majority of the workers were women. All of the employees were in a trade union (the

GMWU) and they were organised within a single branch. This is an examination and an attempted explanation of the patterns of representation and participation which had evolved after seven years of unionisation. The analysis is concerned with the processes involved in shaping the men and women members' quite distinctive patterns of participation. And it is interesting to note in relation to this how, at this level of analysis, the significance of the three 'key areas' identified as crucial above: women's domestic responsibilities, institutional features and men's sexism, shift in terms of the extent to which they are primarily or immediately determining. For example, women's domestic commitments can certainly inhibit them from attending meetings out of working hours or conferences etc., away from home, and this may be directly important for the extent of their office-holding at higher levels of the organisation. But at workplace level the impact of these commitments is to some degree "controlled for" - home responsibilities or not - the women are, at least, at work. But again it is assumed that women do not take on the position of shopsteward (or act as 'unofficial' spokeswomen or 'stand-up' to management) primarily or solely "because of their domestic commitments." We would argue that the extent to which this may be the most direct or immediate reason needs to be examined. To say this is not at all to deny the significance of women's domestic role: "I already do two jobs - I'm a worker and a mother. Now you are saying I should do three jobs and be a shopsteward as well." (1) But we would suggest that there is a danger of "women's domestic commitments" being made to bear so much direct or primary explanatory weight that the significance of the other "factors" affecting women's participation are falsely minimised. Certainly, at the workplace, we found

the significance of domestic commitments much more indirect - underpinning or structuring the women's position, in the light of which (perhaps) other 'factors' - linked but not necessarily either wholly or directly reducible to this - were more immediate and primary. An example here is the role of the employer. In our analysis the employer's bargaining activity was fundamental in shaping the (men and) women workers' union involvement, and directly so. In most accounts of union structure however, employers tend to remain almost totally invisible (as in Lewenhak (1977) ) or have only a shadowy and 'indirect' presence (apart from when they are directly engaged in a dispute over union recognition).

The study began at a time when women in some unions were beginning to make their voices heard and to gain recognition for their demands within their own organisations. (In 1975 the TUC had adopted a version of the Working Women's Charter as a 'code' of bargaining aims for the movement). In common with many researchers, I suspect, my original aims were altered when my fieldwork - which took place over two years (1977-8) - began, and the reasons are relevant.

#### AIMS

The starting point of my research is that women are not usefully considered separately as a 'special category' of employee. They are workers who sell their labour power and enter relations of employment and the labour process under significantly different conditions to men. What are the implications of this?

In combining waged and domestic work in the way that they do, married women especially, bring into employment needs and demands shaped to an important degree by pressures outside the workplace. Increasingly, union policies might acknowledge this, but with what effect?

I hypothesised that the failure of trade unions to take up women's interests - distinctive because of the way they combine home-related and job-related aspects - was rooted in a disjuncture between these and the institutionalised patterns of collective bargaining already shaped by male workers along 'economistic lines' through their historical dominance of the organisational structures.

I, therefore, considered that, in practice the most distinctive aspects of women's needs and demands would only be accommodated within the collective bargaining process and machinery with difficulty. Some of these issues would be more easily 'processed' and acted on than others. Perhaps those more specifically job-related would be taken up. But I was interested to discover what happened (and had been happening) to those 'other' needs and demands, constantly arising outside the workplace, but 'willy-nilly' brought into it because women workers - unlike men - do not have wives. I imagined that some process might take place whereby, in the normal course of job-related bargaining and grievance handling, some of these 'women's issues' would be progressed, but perhaps in a slightly 'translated' form (to make them 'fit' more appropriately). For example, the demand for child-care facilities might be translated into agreements about 'time-off' or flexible hours; or demands for any of these - into more pay. Some issues, of course, might not be taken up at all, or simply fail.

I wanted to observe how this process might work, i.e. how 'women's demands' fared in the established bargaining channels - to what degree they succeeded, were distorted or failed. This would obviously have implications for both the ability and willingness of women workers to participate in trade unions. The nature and extent of their involvement is clearly going to be connected to the degree to which they can progress those demands - which specifically arise from their position as wage labourers and domestic workers - via this institution for advancing their interests.



In a sense, this was, indeed, the process I observed and have analysed. But, needless to say, things were not quite as I had imagined. No "special" or progressive demands recognisably advancing the women workers' position by shaping employment to their needs were on the bargaining agenda - or even within a mile of it. More significantly, as far as the women (the overwhelming majority of workers in the company) were concerned, none of the 'usual' or 'expected' issues appeared to be on the agenda either.

The question I was studying was, therefore, shifted back a stage. Naturally, in order to make 'advances' a sufficiently strong bargaining position has first to be established through adequate defence. But these workers seemed to have great difficulty in securing the most minimal level of <sup>job</sup> security, despite being employed in a highly profitable firm and being fully unionised. Why were they so weak? For sure, compared to the majority of trade unionists chronicled and analysed in the field of Industrial Relations (but not, I suspect, compared to the majority of trade unionists) these members appeared peculiarly ineffective.

There are very few studies of women in the workplace. And in the few that exist there is little analysis of their position in relation to trade union organisation. But the picture, vivid in descriptive accounts such as that by Cavendish (1982), seems to confirm that women workers feel themselves to be ineffective and in a number of respects appear to be rendered so. Pollert (1981) tried to explain the weakness, in trade union terms, of the women workers she studied - who she described as being:

"Stuck in a rut of fear - fear of lack of backing from the union, fear of lack of support from each other. The shopfloor was fragmented by mistrust and individualism...."

Pollert (1981) p.181

But apart from a short discussion of the pattern of representation ( the women's shopstewards were men who worked elsewhere; and the male workers were better represented proportionally ) a "vicious circle of poor organisation, vulnerability and fear" is, again, better described than explained. The women "lacked the necessary level of co-operation and organisation." This study aims to ascertain both the level that is "necessary" and the reasons why it might not be attained.

#### THESIS STRUCTURE

A short resume' of the argument, content and findings is provided in the introduction to each Chapter and is not, therefore, reproduced here. Thereafter, the thesis is divided into three parts.

In the first, some theoretical and analytical issues are set out in the light of shortcomings identified in established approaches to the questions of women's low levels of unionisation, representation, organisation and bargaining in industrial relations literature.

In Part Two, the position of the women in the production process at BSR is examined in order to identify problems arising both within the workplace and outside it; and to see how these were linked.

A major tendency, as Sally Alexander has noted, of investigations into women's position is that they never probe beneath the surface phenomena of inequality:

"Discrimination and inequality are dealt with as they operate in the market place, but the world of social production is never investigated as a source of divisions and inequalities among the working class. Thus, technical innovation is

mentioned as providing 'opportunities' for female employment; mechanization is held responsible for the 'feminization' of many jobs; women's 'dual role' is invoked as an explanation for the low-paid, part-time character of married women's work. But the methods of work and payment, the division of labour and hierarchy of jobs - in other words, the relations of production and the labour process itself - are never carefully examined."  
Herzog (1980) p.13                      My emphasis.

We demonstrate how the relations of production and the labour process structure bargaining interests, relationships and opportunities. Some of these chapters are divided into two parts: the first outlining management's position and strategies: the second, examining these from the point of view of the women workers.

The relations of production and the labour process are themselves structured by the sexual division of labour. We look at the sexual differentiation of interests, problems and demands arising as a result of this. We compare the bargaining position - in terms of the strength, resources and opportunities available - of the men and the women workers, and most importantly, the nature of the relationship between them.

In Part Three we go on to examine the women workers' position in relation to the trade union on the shopfloor and at branch level. With unionisation, representational and bargaining structures were established - backed up by institutional strength and resources. However, we find that all these features are problematic from the women's point of view in terms of the problems established in Part Two - for reasons which do not stem either wholly or necessarily directly from characteristics of the workers involved or their sex per se. Rather, they appear to derive from the position of this group in terms of the relations of production and the labour process, inequalities in bargaining relationships, the nature of the institution and the representation/bargaining process itself.

The thesis is a sustained argument therefore, against explanations of women's position in trade unions (or anywhere else) which isolate the subject and treat it as a separate and unitary category. We need to have a view of the major sets of interests and relationships structuring capital and labour, see that the working class is gendered, ask questions about the implications of this for society's institutions, and analyse the processes - in terms of both outcome and consequence - through which changes are, or can, be made. Taking the point made by Sally Alexander about the equality legislation:

"However desirable in themselves, the recommended reforms (where they have been introduced) leave untouched the place of women in social production."  
Herzog (1980) p.15

We have examined the position of women in social production in order to ascertain the limits and possibilities of change through the established institutions of trade union organisation and collective bargaining.

#### Methods and problems of Research

Most of the material used in this thesis was gathered in two phases over a period of two years 1977-8 in the manner set out below. I too, found myself unable - as Helen Roberts had warned - to completely follow the advice of Evans Pritchard to:

"behave like a gentleman, keep off the women,  
take quinine daily and play it by ear."  
Roberts (1981) p.1.

#### NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

For a period of six months between January and June 1977 I was permitted to spend between two and four days a week at the office of the '69' branch of the GMWU with the full-time branch administrative officer (hereafter referred to as the branch secretary). I was allowed to accompany her on regular visits to the BSR factories where she met with convenors, shopstewards and management in the course of her duties. I was also fortunate to be allowed to observe on numerous occasions,

negotiations involving top management and the union's full-time regional organiser. I attended a branch meeting and a number of shopsteward meetings at factory and 'joint' factory level. I took copious notes and was allowed to copy some of the documents I was shown. This fieldwork came to an end when the annual wage claim was being negotiated and the company gave way to pressure from the membership to 'break' the social contract. This was a tricky period for the union officials as well because the union was committed to uphold the labour government's incomes policy.

#### INTERVIEWS

Research was resumed in October 1978. This time, based at one of the four factories (Stourbridge), I was given the use of a small room and allowed to interview the shopstewards, using a tape-recorder, during work's time.

I had, initially prepared my questions and began to "try them out" during the summer at one of the other factories in the group. But there had been considerable changes in the domestic organisation there during the year's upheavals and the shopstewards, who were still finding their feet, decided they did not want to continue with the interview programme. There were no similar problems (so far as I was aware) at Stourbridge and the interviewing continued for several days each week over a three month period - ending in December 1978.

I was given a list of the shopstewards' names and prepared a pre-interview questionnaire (see Appendix 6) which asked for 'basic information', dates etc. This was distributed and collected by the convenor. It was useful from my point of view because it saved time in recording basic details and gave me a preview of the person I was to meet. It seemed to be useful for the shopstewards as well because they had more time to remember details and dates - for example, of their previous job histories.

Of the 19 female shopstewards listed, 16 were available and prepared to be interviewed, as were 6 of the 7 males (2). The procedure was for me to inform the personnel officer who I wanted to see and she would enquire whether or not they could be released from the shopfloor. The shopsteward was then informed and made their way to the little "office". Occasionally, they were re-called and some interviews were taped over a period of several days. Some of the interviews lasted - in broken periods - over 4 hours. Most were around three hours long.

Although I followed the schedule as a guide it was not adhered to strictly. Nor did I adopt the position of 'simple questionner', being prepared to enter discussions, answer questions and give opinions either when required or when clearly appropriate. (see Oakley (1981))

None of those interviewed objected to the tape-recorder (I always offered to take notes instead). But I found it rather off-putting myself and constructed a "tea-cosy" for the machine, so that it could be more easily ignored.

My questions covered three main areas, employment (from school onwards), union and home-life, but mostly concentrated on their own and their members' experience of the factory and the union. This was my main access to the position of the 'ordinary' members, since I did not live in the area and the workers were not available for interview in works time. (For the shopstewards, permission for time off had been given under "union-duties".)

One of the problems with this research is, therefore, that information about the members' problems is mainly derived through the shopstewards. In one respect, at least, this may be less serious than it at first appears; because there had also been a considerable change-round at the

factory in the previous year, when the long-standing convenor had resigned and many new shopstewards elected. Seven of the sixteen women interviewed had been representatives for under twelve months and only one for more than five years. Of the men, four had been stewards for under two years and two for over five years. While the perspective of many of those interviewed might be expected (and did appear) to be 'less institutional' as a result; it is also true that all of the shopstewards had had at least two years length of service with the company, since this was a requirement for being nominated as a shopsteward in the first instance. They were, therefore, a part of the 'stable core' of employees which will have coloured their perceptions. (Twelve of the women and four of the men had been with the company between six and nine years.)

Transcription of the tapes took many months (a real problem with this method). I reproduced them verbatim and in long-hand. I made detailed indexes of both the transcripts and my field-notes under a variety of "subject headings". A process which was a useful start to analysis. Whenever I have used quotes subsequently I have attached an index reference which allows these to be located on tape and in transcripts or field-notes. This has saved so much time and trouble that I have retained the referencing in the thesis. It is meaningless for the reader and apologies are offered for the inconvenience, but any kind of check or follow-up would be almost impossible without such a system.

I have used a large number of quotations. They are utilised as a necessary part of the text in four main respects: first to convey information; secondly to illustrate - or more strongly - demonstrate points; thirdly to support or confirm arguments (often at the same time, conveying complexity); and finally, to initiate suggestions and open up lines of analysis for the reader - in much the same way as they have done for me.

In transcribing, I at first reproduced exactly what was on the tape. In using the quotes I realised this was unnecessary - some are reproduced in the text in this way (with dropped 'h's etc.). I would have preferred the time to write them out properly. Finally, to preserve confidentiality in respect of those whose unstinting generosity made this research possible - nearly all of the names have been changed.



INTRODUCTION

Footnotes

- (1) June (APEX) quoted in Beale (1982).
- (2) I also tape-recorded a detailed discussion with the factory's production manager.

PART ONE

WOMEN IN THEORY

CHAPTER 1: WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS AND THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DISCIPLINE

This study looks at the organisation of women in the union at workplace level and their involvement in collective bargaining. There is not an abundance of literature on this subject, and rather than discuss the few studies which are available here, the aim, in this chapter, is to place this paucity of information and analysis within the broader context of industrial relations as an academic discipline in this country. It is, therefore, a "lack of literature" review, and an attempted explanation.

As it happens, the literature in the mainstream of industrial relations is not entirely silent on the issue of women in trade unions. Indeed it may be more accurate to say that their absence is less a consequence of being unconsciously over-looked, rather than a result of being (consciously) viewed in a particular kind of way. Not just in general, but, more importantly, in relation to whatever subject matter has been of major concern to industrial relations practitioners at different times in the post-war period. The work of three such authors is, therefore, examined here. Their work has been, and remains, central in the field of industrial relations; the main interest of each reflects what has at some point grown to be the focus of strong, general political concern over the last thirty years.

George Bain is noted for his work on the question of trade white-collar union growth, the development of/unionisation and changing patterns of membership. Hugh Clegg, responsible for the Report of the Donovan Commission in 1968, has been a central figure in discussions about workplace organisation and the development of collective bargaining. John Hughes took an early interest in the question of

trade union government and structure.

None of these authors has made the position of women in trade unions a particular focus of concern. Those who have done so may be viewed as exceptional; which may be all the more reason why work on the mainstream should be examined for whatever views/ explanations of the position of women which are offered. Moreover, all three of the authors chosen, recognise, in some degree, the problematic we are concerned to explore.

First, there is the slow and uneven development historically of proportions of women unionised. That is, their peculiar membership patterns which differ from those of men. Secondly, there is the persistent problem of women's slower and again, uneven, patterns of participation and representation within trade union structures.

The analysis offered by the authors whose work we are examining, both reflects and establishes the dominant (although by no means static) approach to, conception of, and explanation for these problems in the field of industrial relations. Before identifying the main elements of these, it may, to begin with, be worth noting two general features of the kind of approach, conception and explanation which can be found throughout the literature.

First, the approaches which are adopted. These tend to fall into two main groups: women are a problem when they do not join trade unions; and women are a problem when they do join trade unions. Unpromising as this might seem, interest in the literature examined here is justified because of the underlying recognition that women do have some kind of distinctive relationship to trade unions and the authors thereupon attempt to offer some kind of explanation for this.

A second general feature of the literature characterises the kind of explanations which are provided. Authors usually want to emphasize either woman-related features or job-related features or union-related features, and fashions in this have tended to change.

#### Women's low level of unionisation

American industrial relations practitioners who adopted a systems approach, began building models in earnest in the 1950's, in order to isolate the main factors which might appear to have a determining effect on whether trade unions "grew" or not. The context of this work was that the proportion of the unionised workforce in America was low and falling. This appeared to be related to massive changes in the structure of the economy, leading to changes in the occupational structure and in the composition of the labour force.

Women make a regular appearance in this literature and the issue is nearly always presented in the same kind of way. This is a typical example from Shister (1953):

"The sex of the relevant work group will influence their propensity both to organise and to stay organised. While the proportion of females 'permanently' in the labour market has been increasing, many women, if not most - look upon work experience as a temporary interlude between school and marriage or school and the rearing of a family. The problems they confront in the labour market, even though they may be serious, are viewed as temporary and transient matters. This entails indifference towards unionism. The large proportion of women in retailing for example, has certainly been one of the obstacles to any large-scale unionisation of this industry". p.421 (My emphasis).

The explanation given here, apart from its totally unsubstantiated generalisations and assumptions, is given in terms of women's attitudes

and many other writers have contended that women are neither career-oriented nor hold strong attachment to the labour force and are therefore, highly resistant to union organising efforts. But by the 1960's dependence upon this kind of explanation had become less fashionable and we begin to hear much more along the lines of Bernstein (1954) who explained the low unionisation of women in terms of "the jobs held by women in sales, service and office occupations, rather than their sex". This inclination to stress structural features of employment rather than attitudinal (normative) aspects of the workers has been the one adopted by George Bain who extended the American interest in union growth to Britain.

We can divide the body of Bain's early work in terms of two themes: White collar unionism and overall aspects of trade union development such as aggregate size, industrial coverage and membership density - particularly in relation to changing employment trends. The earlier worry in the context of the Donovan Commission - which assumed a close relationship between the trade unions on the one hand and the effectiveness of the Government and the country's economic performance on the other - was that the power and influence of the trade union movement may be in decline. Largely due to the shifting employment structure and changing composition of the labour force - away from strongly unionised and towards weakly unionised areas - the unions, it was feared, might become "the representatives of a declining industrial minority". McCarthy (1962). However, after 1968 there was a general resurgence and attention was switched to examining the "causes" and identifying the determinants of union growth, largely by establishing statistical correlations.

Two questions addressed in Bain's work are of interest to us here. First, is a high proportion of women in the workforce associated with a low level of unionisation? And secondly, what are the political implications of the growth of white collar unionism?

In respect of the first question, two papers may be mentioned: First, Bain and Price (1976) (which updates an earlier article Bain and Price (1972)), and second, Bain and Elsheikh (1979). The first merely "charts" changes in female share of employment and increasing union membership and density with tables - but there is no discussion of the findings at all. In the second paper we have a regression analysis (but still no discussion) to test the proposition that the higher the proportion of women (especially married) in an industry, the lower the level of unionisation is likely to be (i.e. Shister's proposition, see above).

The results are equivocal, but do seem to suggest that there definitely is some kind of effect due to sex. For in a discussion about "age effect" and "sex effect", the authors state:

"Although females per se tend to have a negative effect on unionisation, age per se tends to have a positive impact, and ... the age effect may have cancelled out the sex effect". Bain & Elsheikh (1979).

and, further on:

"The negative impact of women upon the inter-industry pattern of unionisation is less strong now than it was twenty years ago". Ibid .

So, presumably, it was there once and still exists. Once again a "depressing" effect on unionisation associated with women has been found. How is it to be explained?

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It is in the work on white collar unionism, Bain (1970), that we find the most discussion of women and unionisation in the section headed SEX in Chapter IV. Sex is considered as a factor which could help to explain the "pattern of white collar unionism". The issue is important for analysts concerned to draw out the political implications of shifts in the composition of the organised sectors of the labour movement, thus interest had already been shown in the question (problem) of women. Blackburn (1967) had suggested that characteristics of female employment, for example, the discontinuity and supplementary nature of their earnings, reduced women's "commitment" to work, thereby increasing their indifference to trade unionism. Lockwood (1958) on the other hand, disagreed with the conclusion that it was the sex ratio which caused differences in degree of unionisation:

"Clearly, the factor of sex is of relatively small importance among the conditions affecting unionisation. In other words, the differences between different types of clerical employment are much more significant than differences in their sex composition". p.153 .

Bain joins in the debate, but sits on the fence in relation to these conclusions.

"Lockwood's findings are sufficient to indicate the inadequacy of generalisations about women having a dampening effect on the level of unionisation, but they are not sufficient to discount his argument completely". Bain(1970) p.40 (my emphasis).

Because, says Bain, "It is common knowledge that the density of unionisation is much less among women than among men ... There is a correlation between low union density and a high proportion of women among white collar workers in manufacturing industries"

(ibid, p.41). How does he explain this? Providing evidence that Lockwood was short of, Bain accounts for differences in the degree of unionisation associated with sex in terms of the different patterns of male and female employment across industries and firms. Smaller firms and industries with low employment concentrations are associated with lower unionisation and proportionally more women just happen to be employed in these areas. He concludes:

"Density of unionisation and proportion of women have no significant connection with each other except through their separate relationships to a third variable, the degree of employment concentration". Ibid p.43 .

The problem with this analysis is that while Bain's results tend to show there is an independent "sex effect", his conclusions say there is not. (i.e. that it has nothing to do with the fact that they are women, it is to do with where they are employed). Bain is able to come to a comfortable conclusion which manages to fall in line with both the TUC <sup>(1)</sup> and modern thinking on women:

"Female employees appear to have no inherent characteristics which make them more difficult to unionise than men, or, at least, if they have, unions have been able to overcome them". Ibid p.43 .

Overall, we find the weight of Bain's explanation of the pattern of female membership of trade unions, specifically the density or degree of unionisation, is couched in terms of certain job or employment characteristics which can be associated with "propensity to unionise", rather than characteristics inherently associated with the job-holders themselves. One could argue that this "explanation" raises many more questions than it answers.

For example: what are the relationships between the different features selected? Why are women in these sort of jobs? Why are these jobs badly organised? And, ultimately, there does seem to be a "sex effect" which shows up in these correlations, whether one likes it or not. But the way the analysis is presented, these results are passed over, and we are left to conclude that there are really no distinctive aspects which relate specifically to women which remain and therefore need to be examined. This is of crucial importance from our point of view, but it is also significant in terms of Bain's own problematic which is concerned with the political implications of the changing composition of organised labour. There is a suggestion that sex-differences have no "real effect" at all. So the question of whether or not the increasing female membership and density, noted in Bain & Price (1976), could have any implications for the trade union movement, is never raised.

Finally, if we are directed to examine employment or job-related features alone, those who are looking at the position of women are left with a problem, because of course, by now the women have totally disappeared. They're still not in the unions, and now they're not in the analysis either. But if the women appear merely to disappear from the analysis of George Bain, they hardly seem to appear at all in the work of Hugh Clegg.

#### Women's low level of organisation and bargaining

The work of Hugh Clegg is of particular interest in relation to the approach to women in trade unions because his standard textbook has been recently revised and there are notable differences between

the last two editions. The analysis provided in Clegg (1972), "The System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain" is thus compared with that which is found in Clegg (1980), "The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain".

A further reason for examining this author's works is his particular interest in the workplace and the initial stages of union organisation. Both books are structured in terms of an implicit model of trade unionism, whereby the work group is constituted as both the basic unit and the initial stage of a process which culminates in the formation and membership of a trade union at a later (and more mature?) stage. According to the model, collective activity of an informal and spontaneous kind (such as that investigated in the Hawthorne studies), first takes place in this work group context. This gives way to "planned collective activity" (Clegg (1972) p.27), and from here, the development/joining of the institution proper. This would appear to be a useful starting point for examining sex-differences in unionisation. Since the 1972 edition presents more information about this, than that of 1980, our discussion draws on the "unrevised" analysis first.

It is apparent that for Clegg, sex differences are significant from the earliest stage. Following the conclusions of the Hawthorne studies (rather uncritically), women are seen as not susceptible to informal collective activity. Following on from this, for this author, therefore, women comprise a category which is "not predisposed to planned collective activity". (Ibid p.27).

"In most factories of any size it seems that one or more groups have a reputation for sustained activity in the industrial relations

field, while others are considered quiescent. Generally it seems that work group activity is much lower among women and white collar employees than among male manual workers". Ibid p.26 .

To substantiate this, Clegg cites Lupton (1963). But it should be noted that Lupton himself was careful not to draw such general conclusions from it:

"It would be necessary, in each case, to examine the structure and traditions of the industry in which they are working".  
Lupton (1963) p.92 . (2)

Clegg also outlines a notion of strike proneness to substantiate his thesis:

"If the number of unofficial strikes were taken as an index of work group action (on the assumption that official strikes are evidence of formal trade union activity), then women and white collar employees strike much less frequently than male manual workers".  
Clegg (1972) p.26.

Of this, we might note: that the "index" may not be the best nor the only one to use; the "assumption" is certainly dubious; and the subsequent generalisation, even if it follows, is not backed by evidence or references. (3)

To explain his proposition, Clegg mostly depends on Sayles (1963), quoting from this paragraph in Sayles' book:

"..... low prestige jobs are likely to contain larger than proportionate shares of young newcomers, low seniority employees, persons marking time until seniority brings them promotion, unambitious individuals, and workers who intend to remain only until they can find better jobs. Employees of these types do not exert vigorous pressure for the improvement of their working conditions". p.55 .

Again, it should be noted, Clegg does not use the final sentence found in this quotation, he substitutes his own conclusions, thus:

"Such groups are not predisposed to planned collective activity". He goes on, "Because women are concentrated in lower grades, tend to be less career-minded than men, and have a considerably higher rate of turnover than men, work groups of women are more likely than groups of men to come into this category". p.27. (My emphasis)

While it is clearly tenable to locate the position of women in terms of the environmental features identified by Sayles as significant, we are again forced to note that Sayles was (also) reluctant to assert these general conclusions about the differences between male and female work groups - that Clegg was now using him to "prove":

"Nevertheless, those female groups that we expected, on the basis of other criteria, to produce high activity, often fulfilled the prediction".  
Sayles (1963) p.68 .

Apart from the passage on women quoted from Clegg (1972) above, which contains elements of both attitudinal and structural environmental factors (but with no indication of how these might be related), there are only a few brief snippets we can glean from Clegg which might "explain" such a notable difference between women and men in trade unions. He mentions, for example, apprenticeship which affects few women, but which "offers especially favourable conditions for indoctrination in group values". (Ibid p.30).

Also:

"the presence of trade unions" which "promote collective action, so trade union membership may both indicate belief in solidarity and help to strengthen it". Ibid p.29 .

Noting that almost twice as many men are in trade unions than women, he concludes, irresistibly, that "these figures help to explain the relatively low level of group activity among white collar employees and women". (Ibid p.29). This, in the absence of any other discussion, has every appearance of being circular.

In terms of the basic model, therefore, the position of women is identified as distinctive, although the distinctions are designated negative and (therefore?) neither explained nor explored. Clegg's work on the development of collective bargaining is however, further elaborated in terms of two major themes, namely the formal and informal system. What is the position of women in regard to these?

The development of the informal system is seen as central to the growth of domestic plant bargaining, of such importance in the 1960's - 1970's. Two areas were early identified as crucial to such developments, namely problems of overtime and payment by results systems. Unfortunately women workers are not considered significant in either respect:

"Overtime is a male habit"(ibid p.183) and since women "work less overtime, then they are less likely to exercise work group control over the amount and distribution of overtime earnings".  
Ibid p.27 .

Can we assume they would if they did? And, quoting the conclusions of the NBPI Report No. 65, "PBR systems" (May 1968) , Clegg declares that there is:

"a marked difference between men and women in the readiness to haggle over job values, on which women appear to have accepted the results of work measurement as 'correct' and tend not to bargain over times and prices". Ibid pp.266-7 . (4)

This is despite studies which show the contrary Lupton (1963), Cunnison, (1966), Brown (1973).

The consequence of all this is that in the Donovan Report which was centrally concerned with the informal system, the only specific reference to women is not in the context of trade unions at all, but appears in Chapter VI "The Efficient use of Manpower" (sic) Donovan (1968)a .

What can be learned from Clegg's study of the formal system? The lower, slower, and "weaker" unionisation of women is simply noted as a fact:

"Women are not so well organised as men. About half of male employees in Britain are in unions, but rather less than one female employee in four. This helps to explain the poor performance of distribution, catering and domestic service, all of which are predominantly women's industries".  
Clegg (1972) p.61 .

And as for their participation in trade union government, he notes in his study Trade Union Officers:

"The proportion of women in each group (of officials) is, of course, far below the share of women in total trade union membership".  
Clegg (1961) p.33 . (My emphasis).

No other comment is appended to this, until finally some 100 pages later, we find:

"Women are notoriously less trade union minded than men". Ibid p.130 .

Clearly, we have a series of problems here which stand in little danger of receiving an explanation. Overall, in Clegg's work



women are given very little attention at all. (5) Where women are mentioned, however, we are given to understand that it is their work group behaviour which has first to be explained in order for us to comprehend their lack of progress in trade unionism. Perhaps it is worth mentioning here that the lack of analysis in this work does not appear to invalidate the importance of utilising a non-institutional focus - since it could be argued that if Clegg had not started from this point himself (that is the work group, rather than the union), he would never have "seen" women at all. The "explanations" Clegg does provide (up to 1980) to explain the position of women utilises a mixture of both characteristics inherent to women as a sex (for example, less career minded, trade union minded, etc.); and characteristics of their employment situation (for example, size of work group). But there is no indication of whether, or how, these aspects might be related.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of Clegg's work discussed above, is the view he gives us of the power of stereotypes. On at least two occasions stereotypical assertions were being reconstructed, ironically enough, on the basis of works which did, in fact, show a few signs of trying to escape from their own stereotypical foundations.

However, in the revised version, Clegg (1980), these discussions have been removed altogether. The edition has been brought up to date, in order to take account of the vast changes which have taken place over the past ten years - this indeed is reflected in the book's new title. We might note that during this period women have been central to some of the most important changes. They are the subject of trade union growth - the influx of female

membership changing the balance of relations between unions as well as within them, and they are also the subject of much employment legislation burgeoning at this time.

It is curious, therefore, to find that despite this and the increasing amount of literature available on women workers, there are even fewer references to women in this book than in the previous edition. Whereas twenty one items were indexed in 1972, in 1980 there are only nine, and three of these refer to new legislation.

There appear to be two reasons for the change: a deliberate decision to remove explicit assertions about women from the text, and the use of new sources which fail to problematise the position of women. Examples of this last reason include the extensive use of studies by Batstone (1977) and Brown (1973) and Brown (1978), (while Lupton has been dropped entirely). Both of the former are primarily concerned with male workers and the authors ignore the possible implications of gender difference in their work. Thus on the subject of workplace organisation and quoting from a study based on questionnaires to shop stewards (which failed to ask the sex of the respondents), we find the comfortable assertion from Clegg that:

"One finding of Brown and his colleagues which compounds much that has been said about women in trade unions is that, although their survey discovered a lower level of shop steward organisation and activity where the labour force included women as well as men, the relationship is slight. Some predominantly female workforces ... had steward organisations quite as sophisticated as the average predominantly male ones with comparably sized workforces". Clegg (1980) p.49.

And where, in the previous edition, points about women were made explicitly now we may well find precisely the same sources referred to and even quoted, but they are cited in a rather different way and all explicit reference to sex differences have been removed from the discussion. (See, for example, the use of Sayles' bargaining typologies, *ibid* p.55).

In some respects this refusal to problematise gender difference is quite surprising given the interest of industrial relations practitioners in analysing the political implications of the changing composition of the labour force and the increasing impact of this on the labour movement. Over the last twenty years there has been a shifting balance in relations between the different unions - with white collar and public sector unions gaining increasing prominence in the TUC. There have also been significant changes in the balance/proportions of different membership groups, male/female, white collar and manual within individual unions. It was women workers who constituted the major source of this union change and growth, and it was not long before the focus of the problem had started to shift - from their low levels of unionisation to their low levels of participation and representation within the organisational structures. The underlying assumptions of John Hughes, for example, analysing trade union structure and government in 1968 were, certainly, that sex differences had significance. And it is interesting to see why the low representation of women in trade unions had begun to attract attention at this time and what kinds of explanation were offered for it.

Women's low level of participation and representation

If there was any possibility that the changing composition of trade union membership might have implications for unions' "political behaviour", it is easy to see why this was of interest to those industrial relations practitioners who recognised the significance of developing links between the trade unions and the Government. Once trade union leaders became party to making Government economic policies work, the internal affairs of the unions - such matters as representation, participation, integration and control over the membership - (in other words the subject of trade union democracy) was clearly on the agenda. John Hughes puts the matter clearly:

"The main reasons for stressing the importance of membership participation might be listed as follows: unions have continually to commit themselves to policy initiatives". Hughes (1968) p.5.

(Hughes, as will subsequently become clear, is not referring here to the policy initiatives of the membership, and by "unions" he is only referring to the leadership.)

"... not only industrially but also in social and political affairs. Much of the time these will be contested from one direction or another; the union may find itself going against the stream. The influence and pressure that the union can bring to bear is very directly related to its REPRESENTATIVE character, to the extent to which its actions and demands are known to represent the felt interest and active concern of its members. It carries less conviction in its representative role if its initiatives are merely passively acquiesced in by its members or are not even communicated to or understood by many of them. For trade union action to be effective, there has to be an active process of IDENTIFICATION by the members concerned with the means and ends proposed ... Effective action by a trade union necessarily requires also a measure of discipline. But if conformity is required, and minorities coerced, the democratic basis of union decisions has to be clearly in evidence for union action to retain

any moral force. A continuing process of membership participation can help minimise the number of occasions on which members feel the action prescribed by the union as an external imposition upon them". Ibid p.5  
(emphasis in original in upper case. Otherwise my emphasis)

Apart from this need for the close incorporation of labour in interests which have sources other than themselves via the medium of their own organisations, we are given two more reasons why membership participation in trade unions is important, and the influx of women therefore, a problem.

We are told there is a need for increased lay participation "in order to free full-time officers from routine administration". This is specified as the recruitment, retention and servicing of members (!) To do what is unspecified, but presumably this is to allow them more time to sit on the Government's growing number of industrial and consultative bodies.

Finally, we are warned that a low degree of membership participation may give disproportionate importance in union government to organised minority groups - meaning the Communist Party. (6) The overall conclusion is that the influx of women into membership could have quite serious political implications, because of their large numbers in some unions, and their low level of participation and representation in the organisational structures. Because of this, Hughes devotes a special section in his research paper to discuss the problem. Three groups of membership who play a limited role in union government are singled out for special attention, namely: ancillary workers (with second-class membership), young workers and women workers. (Women, in fact, apart from being significantly

represented in all three of these "problem categories", are also largely implicated in most of the other features identified as inhibiting membership involvement, for example labour force scatter and turnover; although these connections are not examined).

It is in his discussion of the shortage of women as officials, on executive committees and in delegations that explanations about their low levels of representation are advanced; and it is interesting to examine them. Hughes reproduces the explanation provided by the TUC Women's Advisory Committee in 1966:

"There is a growing ... realisation that for most women the working day does not finish when they leave their employer's premises.....  
(realisation for whom?). Trade union work is satisfying but it consumes time and it is ... partly because of their domestic responsibilities that so few women act in a representative capacity for their unions in the wider movement although, without doubt, there is still a lingering prejudice in some areas against permitting women to discuss anything other than their own problems... "  
Ibid pp. 29-30 .

His only comment on this is - "It would be true to say that we lack any adequate studies of these pressures, and of the ways in which they operate". (Ibid p.30). But Hughes does go on to criticise some aspects of the way women are treated in trade unions. This is not, however, in terms of what the unions are doing (or not doing) for their women members. Indeed:

"In terms of the development of policy, and of wage bargaining in particular, it cannot be said of the trade unions in recent years that they have been neglectful of the interests of their women members". Ibid p.30 .

His criticisms are levelled at the lack of uniformity, there being no "consistent or generally accepted approach by British trade unions towards the rights and participation of women members". (Ibid p.31). The main source of problems is identified as disorder in "the system". He points to the multiplicity of different

arrangements to be found, a confusion of women's sections, special committees, or 'woman officials' and so on. Perhaps more cogently he points also to the existence of discriminatory rules in the constitutions of various unions (e.g. the AEU), which ensured for women an inferior status and fewer rights. (7) And finally he notes the existence of "backward attitudes" among trade unionists, ~~expressing~~ criticism of those opponents of special representation for women, whose objections were not based on a fear of tokenism, but were instead, grounded in a wish to disregard issues important to women. (8) While admitting that there are valid arguments in respect of the dangers of tokenism, Hughes argues:

"Against this has to be set the inadequate focus of attention on problems and policy objectives of importance to women that there may be in the absence of specific arrangements for representation of women and review of their needs and interests". Ibid p.32 .

In his opinion special representation was beneficial to women:

"It is ... apparent that there has been a very marked improvement in the quality of the contributions made by women delegates at the TUC's advisory conference, as compared with that in its early days; the very existence of the conference may have played a part in that result". Ibid p.32 .

It is apparent that both of these arguments sit rather oddly in the context of the early statement that trade unions can no longer be said to neglect the interests of their female membership. Nor is there any suggestion that women's low levels of involvement might at all be connected to "the inadequate focus of attention on problems and policy objectives of importance to women", or the "lingering prejudice (still found) in some areas". Moreover, his view that the main impact

of special representation lies in the changes wrought in women themselves, rather than in anything or anyone else, still derives from the view that it is in the women that the fundamental problems lie.

Leaving these points aside, together with his top-down conception of trade union democracy and the bizarre suggestion that women members might be unwittingly responsible for communist domination (simply because they are so unwitting..... ?), this short section on the representation/participation of women in John Hughes' research paper represents a more substantial view of the position of women than hitherto seen. One reason for this is, that during the course of the discussion the focus of the problem shifts away from women as object to subject.<sup>(9)</sup> Once this occurs the institution itself is problematised and new areas of investigation are opened up. The effect of this becomes clear when elements of the explanation for women's low levels of participation which are offered here are compared with those given by the writers above. They differ markedly because the trade unions are seen as problematic; and for the first time, therefore, we are presented with "trade union related factors". It is suggested for example, that there are problems for women associated with: the way organisational arrangements fit in with family responsibilities; the way trade union organisation is related to labour market structure, and the way male domination is reflected in discriminatory rules and sexist practices.

We have examined the work of three authors whose output has been influential in each of the key areas of industrial relations: trade union growth, the development of collective bargaining and



organisational structure and government. We have been concerned to explore what kinds of information and explanation is provided about the position of women, since each of these authors has drawn attention to their distinctive and historically sustained patterns of unionisation, participation and representation.

In the course of this investigation, we have identified a number of problems which, it could be argued, are common to much of the literature on this particular subject, that is produced in the industrial relations field. Thus we have found a recurring displacement of analysis by stereotype; a displacement of investigation by assertion; a displacement of explanation by description; plus an absolute shortage of information. To the extent that these kind of problems arise in the industrial relations field in general, that is, regardless of the subject area, their sources may well be found to lie in, for example, the kind of methodologies commonly used (such as correlation/regression analyses); or distortions in the style of conception (such as that produced by reification); <sup>(10)</sup> or an institutional approach (which can lead, among other things, to a failure to problematise the organisation). Undoubtedly, these aspects have a bearing on some of the problems we have identified with regard to the treatment of women.

It may, however, also be the case that the subject area of women, is also peculiarly affected by another source of distortion. This source of distortion has been identified in other academic fields such as sociology, a discipline which Ann Oakley has described as sexist.

"Sociology is sexist because it is male oriented. By male oriented I mean that it exhibits a focus on, or a direction towards, the interests and activities of men in a gender differentiated society. The social situations of men and women today are structurally and ideologically discrepant, and the dominant value system of modern industrialised societies assigns greater importance and prestige to 'masculine' roles than to 'feminine' roles". . Oakley (1974), p.2.

What are the implications of this? One consequence of the sexism Ann Oakley identifies is that women as a social group are rendered:

"invisible or inadequately represented: they take the insubstantial form of ghosts, shadows or stereotyped characters". Ibid p.1

Beyond this there are crucial implications for the discipline itself which is structured fundamentally by this ideology:

"The concealment of women runs right through sociology. It extends from the classification of subject-areas and the definition of concepts through the topics and methods of empirical research, to the construction of models and theory generally". Ibid p.3 .

It is reasonable to assume that the industrial relations discipline is structured in a similar way, although the full consequences of this have yet to be examined. Richard Brown has looked at the way women as employees are treated in industrial research:

"In the majority of cases where they have not been ignored altogether, women employees have been regarded by industrial sociologists in one of two ways: on the one hand as indistinguishable from men in any respect relevant to their attitudes and actions at work; and on the other as giving rise to special problems, for the employer and/or the families or communities from which they come". Brown (1976) p.21

Brown identified two particular consequences arising from this ideological distortion in the discipline which appeared important. First, he found little in the existing body of knowledge which contributed to his own field of study which is concerned with the effects of sexual divisions on worker's social consciousness and their orientations to work. Thus he concludes that the whole discipline has been impoverished as a result of this existing sexist bias. Secondly, he notes a general political consequence: which is that the especially exploitative nature of the relationship between employers and women workers tends to remain invisible and all the more easily ignored. These points can be certainly illustrated with an example from the work of Robert Blauner (1964), who, in "Alienation and Freedom", analysed job conditions in four factory technologies:

"He dismisses the women who make up almost half the workers in the textile industry he studied as 'a major safety valve against the consequences of alienating work conditions'. The high concentration of women in jobs which are, in Blauner's words, 'the least skilled, the most repetitive, and the least free' makes it possible for men to have jobs with the opposite attributes. 'Women in the industry are not dissatisfied with such work' asserts Blauner, without giving his evidence for this statement: 'work does not have the central importance and meaning in their lives that it does for men, since their most important roles are those of wives and mothers'".  
Oakley (1974) p.20 .

A further point can be made about the overall impact of this kind of approach, which may be highly significant for explaining the problem of "absence". Namely, that it has the effect of "actively" closing down whole areas of potential investigation and research. In other words, we would maintain, that women's absence from the literature is not simply a

"reflection", but has, in important respects, been constructed. It is a consequence of the type of approach, analysis and explanation which has been offered when the subject has not been ignored or overlooked. (11)

#### Conclusions

One aim of this Chapter, as stated in the beginning, was to place the paucity of information and analysis available in the area covered by this particular study in the broader context of industrial relations as an academic discipline. We have done this by examining how the position of women in trade unions is handled in some of the literature.

We have noted first, the overall lack of attention this subject receives, which is by no means confined to the authors reviewed. What is the reason for this? Is their lower profile in the literature simply a reflection on the lesser role women play in those organisations which are studied? Then why is this not given a higher profile as a problem? And what about those areas where they do not "play a lesser role?". However, a closer view of the matter reveals there are more serious difficulties here than simply an absence in the literature, because the literature is not entirely silent on the issue of women. We have also found it necessary to examine the nature of the contributions which have been made on the subject. And it is being argued here that this has a more significant impact than mere "absence" suggests.

First we have seen that women are given problem status; viewed as a deviant case from the male norm or deficient in masculine characteristics; treated as a special homogeneous subgroup and categorised in terms of (so-called) inherent sex

characteristics. As a consequence, women are rendered invisible (rather than overlooked); empirical and historical information on the position of women is sparse and theoretical knowledge as a whole is inadequate and distorted.

Secondly, we have seen that there is an overall lack of attention paid to gender. There is a common assumption informing industrial relations research that gender differences or distinctive attributes have no significance in or for analysis and this is matched by the common use of perspectives and methodologies which exclude attention to gender. Again we would argue that this is not just a matter of the question being "overlooked". For where gender difference cannot, perhaps, be ignored, its social or political significance is likely to be demolished by a resort to biological reductionism and other forms of stereotyping, (such as in the example from Blauner above).

Finally, in the works which we examined, and in the literature generally, we commonly find, wherever women were the subject of discussion: the displacement of information, investigation, analysis and explanation, by assertion, description and stereotype.

In conclusion, it is maintained here that this displacement, the "invisibility" of women and the lack of attention to gender, can all be seen to lead directly to the problem we first started with, which was - a lack of information and analysis in the area in which this study is undertaken. This is because the overall impact of each aspect identified above is to close down whole areas of investigation, which is a more important reason for "absence" than simple neglect. The impact of sexist ideology in the field

of industrial relations, therefore, needs to be examined,  
just as it does in every other branch of the social sciences.

CHAPTER 1

WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS AND THE INDUSTRIAL  
RELATIONS DISCIPLINE

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) As the TUC stated:  
"The fact that the proportion of women in employment who belong to trade unions is only about half that of men is mainly to be accounted for by differences in their industrial and occupational distribution". Donovan (1968)b p. 185 (my emphasis).
- (2) See also Lupton's comments, ibid pp. 90-93, 190-191
- (3) Kate Purcell questions the "passive woman worker thesis" in her article Militancy and Acquiescence Amongst Women Workers. Her own studies suggested that men and women "join and express support for unions and engage in widespread action according to the traditions of their industry rather than according to their sex." Purcell (1979) p.123. And she notes how misleading it is to use strikes as an index of militancy.
- (4) This NBPI report also substantiates the notion that women are less interested in pay questions generally. Explanatory offerings include: (for an instance where they appeared less prepared to take on the rate-fixer) "The predominantly female labour force seemed less-aware of pay questions". And (for an instance when earnings were reduced without apparent protest) the women are deemed to be suffering from "a form of economic fatalism (which) prevented them from complaining". NBPI Report No. 65 p.19
- (5) There are very few references to women in general in Hugh Clegg's work. A total of thirty seven appear in Clegg (1964) "A History of British Trade Unions since 1889" Vol 1. 500 pages long.
- (6) Domination by full-time officials is also mentioned but the possibility gives less cause for concern (ibid p.7). In the research paper the Communist Party has a special section, as do women. The one on the Communist Party is bigger. (ibid pp. 69-74).
- (7) Those rules were made illegal by the Sex Discrimination Act.
- (8) "It is not clear whether the objection to 'special representation' is a protest against provision that might make an inferior status more acceptable, or is to be applied also to special representation existing together with full membership rights for women. ... one might envisage a development of women's committees and conferences which indicate recognition of special needs rather than being a badge of inferior status. It is clear, however, that a number of unions resist such developments, even in situations where sections of their women's membership would welcome them". Ibid p. 31 (my emphasis).
- (9) It is interesting to note that when this occurs there is also an inversion in the workers' perspective on trade union democracy from top-down to bottom-up (see the quotation above which refers to the representation of women's interests).
- (10) One consequence of this is to effect a switch between the (live) subject and (inanimate) object. For example:

(10) con'td. "Nupe's style of active recruitment effort - including a marked ability to build effective unionism out of part-time women workers - has clearly distanced its main trade union competitors". Hughes (1973), p.54

(11) This kind of explanation for the absence of literature, interest or research on the position of women is of a rather different kind to that generally offered by those working in the area. For example, Valerie Ellis in her study The Role of Trade Unions in the Promotion of Equal Opportunities notes: "the paucity of research and historical evidence on women and trade union activity ... is itself a reflection of the fact that women have been "hidden from history", that their economic role has with few exceptions been that of a "reserve labour force" to be called upon when needed and despatched to domesticity thereafter." Ellis (1981) p.1. (my emphasis).



CHAPTER 2    SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ANALYSING THE POSITION  
OF WOMEN IN THE TRADE UNION FROM WORKPLACE LEVEL.

In this thesis we examine how the women workers in one company (BSR) fared in relation to the collective bargaining structures established as a result of unionisation. The recognition agreement signed by representatives of the firm and the GMWU contained both procedural and substantive terms; both of which patterned BSR's workplace organisation. On the face of it there was little in the procedural arrangements to suggest that the men would be favoured since, if anything, workplace organisation was bound to reflect the women's numerical dominance. Yet a closer look reveals significant inequalities within these representational and bargaining structures. Most of the key positions in the local organisation were held by men and male workers were over-represented in the domestic system; the grievance procedure at higher levels was dominated by their problems and formal agreements consistently reflected their interests over and above the women's. How is this pattern to be explained?

The usual explanations of women's 'lesser bargaining strength' at the workplace are confined to exploring problematic aspects of the subjects themselves (e.g. their "docility" and family commitments). Similar arguments, in fact, as are advanced to explain why women are not members of, or more active in, trade union organisations in the first place. But will this do? Can we unquestioningly assume that the non-appearance of their problems in the grievance procedure and the down-grading of their interests in agreements, is entirely explained by women's "apathy" in the workplace and children in the home? How much does their lesser bargaining strength within the workplace, for example,

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hinge on the fact that they cannot attend meetings outside it? And, if women are consistently under-represented on the job because they have fewer shopstewards, need we really look no further than their own lack of confidence, to explain this? We hope to show that when the position of men and women workers in relation to their union organisation on the shopfloor is examined more closely, such arguments in terms of the latter's attitudes and family commitments, are being made to bear far too great an explanatory weight. However relevant they are, the immediate significant of these factors must vary with the problem and the level of analysis, and their significance has to be assessed. First, for both men and women, rather than as at present, ignored in relation to the former and assumed for the latter. And secondly, in relation to other aspects of the employment/bargaining relationship which may be in an immediate respect, operative to greater effect and which are at present being missed from the reckoning altogether.

We begin by trying to identify what kinds of approach, theoretical perspectives and concepts can most usefully be employed to examine the impact of the sexual division of labour on trade union organisation and collective bargaining which begins at the level of the workplace.

#### GENERAL APPROACH

We have already argued against a view of women as a separate and 'deviant' category of employee, preferring an approach which sees them like men, selling their labour power on the market and remaining party to its utilisation within the capitalist labour process. Thus the workforce is seen as gendered with a major line of differentiation lying in the way family/household relationships - impinging on both men and women workers - do so to radically different effect. One consequence of the sexual division of labour both inside and outside the workplace may be found therefore, in a distinctive structuring of

interests between men and women in employment. We are concerned with examining how these are mediated by trade union organisation.

A second feature of our overall approach is that we have found it necessary to reformulate the traditional Industrial Relations problematic and pose (the working class in general and) women workers in particular, as being the subject rather than object of inquiry. Thus our question becomes: why and how are trade unions a problem for women?

This perspective has already proved useful to those who, in examining women's low level of participation in trade unions, have wanted to escape from the fruitless circularity of explanations (and recommendations) posed solely in terms of the women themselves.

Writers such as Anna Coote (1980), Bea Campbell (1982) and Ann Phillips (1983) addressing trade unions as problematic have begun to examine the failure of these organisations in representing women's interests, particularly those aspects arising as a result of their family responsibilities differing from those of men. The utility of this approach can be seen in the wide field of enquiry it opens up (which need not be confined to the question of women or sex-based differentiation in the working class). There is the immediate question, for instance, as to what these interests are, and thus the need to enquire into what problems women workers (in this case) have. What is the particular nature of their employment experience and or the issues they raise? At present we have little literature or research on this subject to help us and the heavy emphasis on domestic circumstances differentiating women's position to employment has largely hidden those distinctive aspects which also arise within it. These do not simply derive from the women's 'dual role' (the employment relationship is fundamentally shaped by the forces of capital accumulation and competition) and we need to consider the relevant links. The industrial

and occupational structure is sexually segregated to a very high degree and we would argue that women workers are employed in the most highly exploitative spheres. We need a view also, therefore, of how this structures their needs and demands as waged workers, and in what respects trade union organisation and collective bargaining might be problematic.

Far from spiralling into circularity therefore, our approach raises further questions about trade union structure and how bargaining policies are formed. For, if women's interests are not represented, whose and what interests are? While such an enquiry can be carried out at any level, this study concentrates on the workplace because here men and women workers can be seen in direct relationship with each other at the initial stage of collective organisation.

The questions suggested by this general approach and also raised by our research findings are centrally concerned with the impact of the sexual division of labour on trade union organisation and bargaining power. And in order to examine this, we need first to clarify a few terms which are essential for the analysis. These concern the aspects which together form the core of the concept 'trade unionism'; and in the course of defining them it should also be possible to present the main pillars of our argument. Thus it is considered necessary to specify: first the social relationships encompassed by trade union organisation institutionally at workplace level and above; secondly, the nature of job control as a non-institutional source of bargaining power; and thirdly the nature of the institution's primary practice - collective bargaining.

Social relations of trade unionism

Since we are centrally concerned with exploring the implications of the sexual division of labour for trade union organisation and practice, a key question for analysis is the impact of gender differentiation in and on institutional relationships. This requires us to specify more closely what the main dimensions of these relationships are.

THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

We begin by identifying the main sets of social relationships which together shape trade union organisation and practice as a whole. We see three as being primary. But we might note that there is a common tendency to single out and consider in isolation only one of these. This is found again, for example, in the Industrial Relations literature which defines trade unionism almost exclusively in terms of the regulation of relations between workers and their employers.

However, it is also relevant to consider how relations between employers are mediated by trade union organisation and practice. To the extent, for example, that this leads to an equalisation of employment conditions (or, perhaps, the opposite) between competing units of capital, there is some regulation of their relationship; of the kind indeed, employers have often consciously sought through trade union organisation for themselves.(1)

The third social dimension of trade unionism is particularly crucial from our point of view, and this concerns the regulation of relationships between workers. This is a key aspect of trade union organisation and practice which has again been largely ignored in the academic field of Industrial Relations (tending itself to match the historical progress of its subject area into higher realms of institutionalisation).

It is interesting to note that the Webbs paid far more attention to the impact of trade union organisation on relations between workers than their successors have done. (Fox (1975)) Today, however, in the light of recent work by feminists, it is apparent that the study of women in the workplace and in trade unions, once again serves to reinstate forcefully a focus on relationships between workers. And it is not difficult to see why.

Under capitalism the nature of the relationship between workers in general, first in the labour market and then in employment, is fundamentally competitive. But of all identifiable divisions and groups within the working class, competitive relations between men and women have a particular (and peculiar) prominence. So do the historically developed modes of regulation, since these have been, so frequently, institutionalised in formal trade union practices of sex-based differentiation and exclusion (Cockburn (1983)). It is telling to note, for instance, that a history of women workers in trade unions (such as that produced by Sheila Lewenhak (1977)) may be almost entirely constituted by an account of their relationships with male workers; with correspondingly diminished attention to, for example, the impact of employers on patterns of unionisation.

However, we would argue that neither this nor the Industrial Relations problematic described above is adequate to the task of analysing trade union organisation and practice. Rather, it is necessary to assess the inter-relationship of all three dimensions of this social formation giving proper attribution to the changing weight and significance of each.

Since we are here mainly concerned to examine the implications of the sexual division of labour for trade union organisation and collective bargaining, and the context is a single firm, the most crucial

processes from our point of view involve the regulation of relations between workers and employers on the one hand and regulation of relations between workers on the other: and the links between them (2).

A further aspect of this study is that we are concentrating on trade union organisation at the workplace. Thus, it also becomes necessary to specify more closely the main dimensions of social relationships at this level: in short, to define the concept of "workplace organisation".

#### THE TWO DIMENSIONS OF WORKPLACE ORGANISATION

It is considered here that workers are organised or "collectivised" along two major dimensions and these need to be differentiated. In the initial instance, workers are brought together under the sway of individual units of capital, and within these (re)distributed in each labour process into smaller collectivities or work groups. In the second instance the same workers may be distributed through the mediation of trade union organisation into bargaining units. These two forms of collective are, by no means, necessarily synonymous. On the one hand, bargaining units pattern (and are patterned by) an institutional system of representation which remains the product of negotiation. It is thus subject to different organising principles and pressures to those which shape the labour process, although the representational system is bound to be structured by this to some extent. We would therefore maintain that, exploring both the parameters of and the links between each of these two dimensions, is crucial to any discussion of workplace organisation.



But, more often than not, in the Industrial Relations literature this analysis is entirely missing and both aspects are collapsed into the one generic term. Thus the "workplace organisation" referred to is, in fact, that of the shopstewards; i.e. the institutional form, but how this system of representation relates to the pattern of organisation of the labour process is not revealed (e.g. Batstone (1977)). Without this information, we would argue that it is almost impossible to make sense of either the patterns of representation or office-holding that are evolved and how they may change, or the content of collective bargaining in terms of the issues taken up and the priority they are accorded in the domestic organisation. (Thus in Batstone explanations are entirely at a 'normative' level i.e. in terms of attitudes and character of the shopstewards - and the theory provided is a mystical typology which begs for some kind of material anchorage.)

What are the links between the sexually differentiated occupational structure on the one hand and sex-related differences in union organisation and bargaining power on the other? The analysis required to address this central question is extremely complex. But we would argue from the outset that it is impossible unless both dimensions of workplace organisation - the institutional system of representation on the one hand and the utilisation/distribution of workers in the labour process on the other - are properly differentiated and the relationship between them problematised.

This is a tricky business. Because now we have not only to assess how the two sections of the workforce (male and female) are organised in terms of these two dimensions: that is, to see how men and women are distributed in the labour process and also how they are grouped in union constituencies. We have also to enquire how the men and women relate to each other (within and between each sex-group) in terms of both of

these structures; and also how the structures themselves are related. What impact does the differential power of workgroups have on the institutional structures of the union? If we are discussing the implications of occupational segregation then this is a relevant question.

It brings us to consider the two major axes of our thesis - collective bargaining and job control - and how they are related. We examine them separately to begin with.

#### Job control

If we are proposing that sex-related differences in the institution (patterns of organisation, representation and bargaining power) are related to the sexually differentiated employment relationship, particularly as it is manifested in the sex-segregated occupational structure, then analysis requires that we examine this latter side more closely. Thus, the second term of our argument requires that we specify the nature of job control as a non-institutional source of bargaining power and consider the implications of this for the institutional structures.

The aims of job control in general have to be viewed in relation to the nature of the contract between wage labourers and their employers. This may specify the price or amount of compensation for labour and also the terms (for example, the structure and length of the working day), although it does not secure either these or the continuity of employment and, therefore, income. Moreover, there is no limit specified as to the amount of labour the employer can exact - he is "free" to use the commodity he purchases as his own. Hence it is the regulation of work effort which remains at the centre of workers' job control, and this extends to cover the maintenance/improvement of employment terms and conditions, together with the establishment of longer term security and continuity of income for the individual worker. (3)

Where workers' job controls or 'regulatory practices' are sufficiently strong they manifestly constitute a powerful bargaining resource. They are clearly the basis of 'unitary regulation' of employment relations (security terms and conditions) and even underpin 'collective bargaining' (or joint regulation which as the Webbs observed also "prevails in a more or less elaborate form...long before a trade union comes into existence." (Webb (1901) p.220)

Since we are concerned to explain the bases of the differential bargaining strength of men and women workers and to examine what further implications this might have in the workplace and in the trade union, it is clear that we need to analyse the elements of job control.

#### THE TWO DIMENSIONS OF JOB CONTROL

We are proposing that there are two essential dimensions to job control - technical and social - which spring from the two sets of relations engaging the worker in the labour process - their relationship to the job or task and the relationship to other workers. Job control necessarily requires their regulation of both of these sets of relationships.

But, studies of workers' control in the labour process have a tendency to focus on the individual labourer engaged in exerting control over the performance of the task - that is regulating their relationship to their work alone. (see many of the contributions in Zimbalist(1979)) This neglects the system of co-operation in the labour process which will require the worker also to exert control over relationships with other workers in order to control his/her own task performance. On the other hand studies such as Hawthorne have emphasised the social controls entailed in job regulation but they have retained an individualistic (and male) orientation.

We would argue that no longer a 'petty commodity producer', the individual labourer's job controls must be viewed in the context of the collective worker characteristic of the socialised, capitalist labour process. The individual worker's job controls therefore have necessarily, a collective basis and orientation. The process of protecting/advancing those of one <sup>worker</sup> is dependent upon them also being engaged in the 'protection/advancement' of the collectivity or social organisation in which each individual's controls are embedded. The maintenance/development of job controls entails therefore the regulation of individual workers' relationships to the job and to each other and also the protection of the group as a whole (the strength of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts).

One problem with the literature is that the study of job control practices has usually been carried out in relation to craftsmen where the concept becomes conflated with notions of "craft" and "skill" which tend to emphasise its technical aspects as well as confine its applicability to a tiny minority of (male) workers. We would argue that it is more useful to view the construction of a "skill" and craft strategies (such as those aimed at controlling labour supply) as variations on a more general control theme.

It is certainly necessary to disengage the concept of job control from the notion of "skill". First because this blocks any perspective on the job controls of so-called 'un' or 'semi-' skilled workers. And secondly because it suggests an unwarranted conflation of de-skilling and work degradation (associated with, for example, mechanisation or new technology) with an overall loss of control (Rubery 1978 256-261). And, most importantly from our point of view, the emphasis on technique which a concentration on "skill" endows, does seriously detract from the social bases or dimensions of work regulation.

But a re-reading of some of the studies of craft-workers reveals just how much of their activities centred around socialisation, the development of social cohesion and group "solidarisation". Moreover, the struggle against innovation, viewed from a social rather than a technical perspective, reveals a significant concern on the part of craft-workers with the structural aspects of their relationships with each other. The craftsmen's stand against changes in technology or payment systems (the engineers objections to piecework, for example) seem to us to be as much concerned with their inherent potential for altering the way that the workers related to each other - as much as to the employer, or to other technical/material features, suggesting possible loss of control. Because it is in these social changes also - in the way workers relate to each other within the labour process - that the potential gain or loss of control lies. Once a degree of control has been established on the basis of one pattern of relating, it may be some time before it can be re-established on a new social basis. And some systems of social organisation, production or payment would seem to facilitate this more than others.

Thus it is interesting to note Cynthia Cockburn's discussion of the introduction of new technology into newspaper printing, which has totally transformed the labour process. Many features suggest the job has been de-skilled and the work de-graded although an overall loss of control over the labour process could not be assumed to result. On Fleet Street the Chapels decided to go for "integrated working" as averse to the old system whereby workers specialised in one aspect of the type-setting/composing process only. Where the latter tended to generate hierarchy and division in the work group, in the new system all would rotate jobs (deployment being controlled by the team). It was reckoned

that unity in the Chapel would be enhanced by this and the equalisation of performance and earnings: "There'll be no more prima donnas now" (Cockburn (1983) p.110). The suggestion was, therefore, the loss of areas of strong individual control, as well as that lost generally as a result of the demolition of old skills, could be recouped by the increased collective solidarity of the group as a whole within the new labour process.

If the workers themselves acknowledge the basis of job control in their mode of relating, it seems necessary for analysts to do so as well. It is clear for example, that many of the craftsmen's work rules investigated by Montgomery (1979) are aimed at regulating the relationships between the workers as much as with the employer. We would argue that neither such practices, nor this particular aspect of them, should be seen as being confined to this small group of employees.

#### DIFFERENTIAL JOB CONTROL

If all workers regulate their relationships both to their jobs and with each other on an individual and a collective basis we may surmise that the forms of this regulation will be embodied in a variety of practices - albeit with differing degrees of explicitness and "formality" - and also, with differing degrees of effect. To the extent that we would see job controls as not only a 'consequence' of bargaining strength in the labour process but also in terms of other (institutional) relationships a source of it; we need to consider differences in the scope and extent of these resources available to different groups in the workforce.

While the regulation of work effort can be seen as a requirement common to all wage workers, the nature, extent or the scope of the controls which any group can institute will vary over time and according to a number of factors. Of these, the most important may well lie beyond the power of workers alone to influence (for example, the degree of

competition in the product or labour market). Others may be subject to their influence, but to a degree which is hard to determine, often becoming apparent over the longer rather than shorter period (for example, the system of production, use of technology and social organisation shaping the labour process). Finally, there are, of course, those aspects which fall within the sphere of immediate influence in the workplace and these comprise what is broadly referred to as the "frontier of control" (Goodrich (1975)).

While the speed, degree and the direction that this "frontier" can be shifted by workers or employers continuously varies according to environmental factors as well as their own ability and willingness to move it, its overall position "on the map" is the outcome of much longer-term trends. Thus at any point in time, groups of workers in different sectors of the economy will find themselves engaged in common, in a struggle over the regulation of work effort; but the content, mode and practices of this activity may appear to be quite different. One reason for this being that they are operating from widely divergent "base-lines".

The industrial and occupational structure is patterned by clear-cut divisions along sex-lines. What are the implications of this for men and women workers' job controls and bargaining resources? Since women workers are not generally viewed as engaging in work regulation, the literature is not very helpful. And where comparisons are made - as in Edwards and Scullion (1982) the starting point is clearly the sex of the subjects - which means that sex difference can hardly be explained except in terms of itself. Moreover, this approach renders an evaluation of men and women's job controls as "strong/weak", "oppositional/non-oppositional" - assessed in terms of a comparison of their "achievements" across different industrial sectors - largely meaningless.

Nevertheless, we are interested in exploring the implications of the differential bargaining power and resources of men and women workers. To do this, we need first to examine the sources of job controls in the labour process and the different kinds of problems involved in sustaining these experienced by differently placed groups of workers.

We need, secondly, to look at the uneven pattern of job controls within the (sexually structured) labour force and to ask what impact inequality in work groups' non-institutionally derived bargaining power and resources might have on institutional structures and relationships.

Since the latter are so strongly shaped by the practice of collective bargaining, it is to an examination of this that we now turn, before setting out our hypothesis as a whole.

#### Collective bargaining

The final term of our argument therefore, requires us to specify the parameters and nature of collective bargaining which is the primary practice of trade unionism. It thus shapes institutional relationships to a very high degree, and we need to consider, of course, how gender and the sexual division of labour are relevant in terms of this. We begin with a discussion of our general approach and go on to examine some key aspects of collective bargaining which are crucial to our analysis.

Again, departing from the mainstream approach in Industrial Relations, we would argue that collective bargaining is essentially problematic - for the working class as a whole and for women in particular. To the extent that it perpetuates conceptions integral to capitalism, such as the particular form of relationship between wage labour and domestic work (and the sexual division of labour structuring these spheres) or the irremediable character of wage labour itself, it underpins the characteristically economistic nature of labour politics and the inequalities



which pattern sex relations within the class (Barrett and Mackintosh (1982)). And it is its centrality in trade union practice which makes these organisations the bearers of particular forms of interest definition and articulation which, we would argue, render them especially problematic for women.

Here we will look specifically at the scope, form and content of collective bargaining, and examine the nature of the process. From these more general discussions we can draw the main points of the hypothesis we are using to explore the position of women workers in the union.

#### THE SCOPE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The institutional perspective on trade union organisation which concentrates narrowly on the collective regulation of relations between employers and workers reflects and also defines "trade unionism" almost totally in terms of activity which takes place at this level. (So much so, that Flanders (1970) preferred to narrow the concept of collective to joint-regulation (p.222.))

However, Richard Herdin (1972) has shown how the social dimensions of collective bargaining have (also) been too narrowly defined in industrial relations literature, with its focus on management/union negotiations. Both taking this locus as the starting point and considering it in isolation, serves to conceal, because it passes over, prior collective bargaining processes which have already taken place within either side. It is the outcome of these which subsequently pattern negotiations between each side's representatives when they finally meet "across the bargaining table" (in such terms as, for example, the issues raised, the direction of, and scope for compromise and the possible use of sanctions).

Moreover, the collective bargaining process does not finish with the formulation of an agreement. Whatever the degree of formality or explicitness characterising this, the impact of any compromise remains to be negotiated. (There is a "vital distinction", the Webbs noted, "between the making of a new bargain and the interpreting of the terms of an existing one." (Webb (1901) p.182.) In other words, collective bargaining continues over the distribution of its effects, but, again, more attention is paid in the literature to (the impact of) this process at the level of management and the workforce (Terry (1977)) than to the internal bargaining which takes place on either side.

If the process of collective bargaining - in its 'true sense' - both precedes and proceeds beyond the point of contact between negotiators on the workers' and management's sides, and the social dimensions likewise extend beyond this, then we need a view of how all of these bargaining relationships both 'internal' and 'external', are structured in order to assess the outcome of collective bargaining in relation to any one particular group. Indeed, we would argue that it is impossible to assess the impact of the sexual division of labour and gender differentiation on collective bargaining unless the perspective on its scope is broadened to include the process of negotiation which takes place within the ranks of labour especially.

#### THE CONTENT AND FORM OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

When we look at the content of collective bargaining both between and within organisations, we can see that it has both procedural and substantive aspects. Offe (1980) has argued that this is necessarily the case because the institutionalised forms of interest definition and articulation are particularly problematic for the workers' side. And the problems here are inextricably linked not only to the heterogeneity but also to the nature of the issues involved. Thus he sees collective

bargaining as resting on an institutionalised system of representation which is more suited for registering preferences than constructing the demands in the first place (p.95). Caught between "the two logics of collective action", the process of interest representation is also one of interest re-definition and, therefore, as a consequence, one of distortion (p.79).

The problematic relationship between the form or process of interest representation and the nature of the issues or bargaining content, is also relevant to that other (and more commonly identified) aspect of interest distortion in bargaining on the workers' side. That whereby the impact of procedural and representational forms of collective action on the one hand and employers' power to assert managerial prerogatives on the other, structure a 'preference' for bargaining over compensatory rather than control issues (Herdin (1972), Goodrich (1975)).

Thus, we can see that the distribution of power between bargaining parties, as well as the forms of interest definition and articulation are crucial determinants of collective bargaining and its outcome. And so it is clear that we need to examine the nature of the issues arising for women as a result of the sexual division of labour and their position in employment and to assess what impact the above structural determinants might have in relation to them.

In fact, we already have a suggestion in Offe that it is precisely those aspects of women's interests which render these distinctive which are most likely to be subject to the processes of distortion and re-definition which he describes. Because he identifies, at the outset, that it is the "width of the spectrum" of wage workers' needs - (necessarily) extending beyond their position 'simply' as bearers of labour power - which tends to render these "problematic" (p.75). But Offe does not

consider that the working class is gendered nor that differentiated interests within the class may (also) be systematically subject to differing degrees of distortion and re-definition. This is because his focus is on the inequality of power between capital and labour; and, while he insists on the heterogeneous nature of the latter, the impact of power inequalities structuring the internal processes of negotiation which he does also describe - are not considered. Although we would, of course, argue that they are also crucial.

#### THE NATURE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The final and key point to be made here refers to the nature of collective bargaining itself. We would argue that it is essentially a distributive process involving the exchange of costs as well as benefits for the workers. What is the nature of the costs involved?

The pluralist assumption is that under 'normal conditions', through the system of joint negotiation, both sides gain. Leaving aside for the moment the pre-supposition of parity in power or 'joint interest', this conception must also 'unconsciously' assume growth. For during periods of capital's retrenchment, joint negotiations will reflect pressure on workers to 'share' the costs - perhaps financially in terms of a wage cut or by increased effort through speed-up and work intensification - with no guarantee of picking up an equivalent share from any future surplus. The problem is that even when there is a surplus to be shared, the quid pro quo's integral to any negotiated settlement - being a bargain and having two sides - tend to be ignored in industrial relations research. Perhaps this is because the institutional perspective lends emphasis to the procedural rather than the substantive aspects of

the process. There is, in any case, a reluctance to admit that if "both sides gain" costs must be involved for the workers.

An exception to this can be seen in the studies of productivity bargaining (for example, the Fawley Agreements Flanders (1964) and McKersie and Hunter (1973)). These are distinctive in the recognition accorded both to the substantive issues and also to the fact that the bargain has two sides - one of which is constituted by the employers' demands. It is interesting to note that, while McKersie and Hunter feel able to refer in their text to the 'costs and benefits' these two sides constitute from the workers' point of view, they are rather more coy in their titling - these become "achievement" and "reward" elements respectively (1) (Back to "both sides gain".)

We would not hold that 'productivity bargaining' is a significantly different form of collective bargaining apart from the explicitness of the employers' demands. And since, as has been noted elsewhere, collective bargaining was not foisted on management by trade unions (Clegg (1964) and Bain (1983) pp.152) but has historically been utilised by employers as an essential means of gaining control over the labour force and the labour process, it is this aspect, control, that can be taken as generally characteristic of the nature of employers' demands. What then is the nature of the 'exchange'?

Andre Gorz in the 1960s, attempted to assess the implications and construction of wage (compensation) rather than work (control and job content) issues as constituting the central vehicle of workers' demands, and subject of trade union negotiation. This was in the period that so-called 'productivity bargaining' developed as an explicit practice. And a longer term assessment of those gains (monetary) which were immediately

apparent to labour might already be confirming the more problematic aspects of collective bargaining suggested by Gorz and others - wherein workers have been and are, consistently encouraged to accept financial compensation in return for changes in working conditions and practices which reduce their job control and ultimately their bargaining strength (see for example the impact of 'productivity' agreements at Chemco: Nichols and Armstrong (1976) and Nichols and Beynon (1977); and at Churchman's: Pollert (1981)).

According to Pollert, for example, the women at Churchman's altogether "lacked the necessary level of co-operation and organisation" to engender effective resistance (p.183). Yet the tobacco workers "retained memories of lost control" (p.175). This had existed before the joint agreement for a proficiency pay scheme which had been accompanied by drastic reorganisation of the labour process - resulting in considerable fragmentation, division and separation of interests among workers (p.181).

It is therefore, quite clear that the links between the institutional and non-institutional regulation of the employment relationship at workplace level are problematic; and we need to explore further the parameters of this.

#### COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND JOB CONTROL

It has been recognised that the collective basis of job control or work regulation is, and has been historically, independent of trade union organisation. In his classical study in 1930 of output restriction among (so-called) unorganised workers, Mathewson had observed:

"The same practical necessity is impressed upon all wage-earners, and the common mind resulting from the similar circumstances in which they find themselves, develops an instinctive co-operation and collective action for restriction where trade unions are not present to organise it."

(Mathewson (1969) p.165)

Against Mathewson we would argue that the basis of co-operation and collective action lie less in the instincts than in the organisation of the labour process. Clearly therefore, in order to examine the relationship between the two forms of collective regulation, it is necessary to differentiate between the institutional resources available to workers as a result of unionisation - a broad based collectivity and the system of representation and negotiating structures, and those patterns of organisation and bargaining resources derived from the labour process - a narrowly based collectivity and the systems of co-operation and job control. How are the two related? And what impact does institutional regulation have on the maintenance/development of non-institutional regulation?

To the extent that trade union organisation provided an institutional forum for the formal elaboration of (previously established) work rules, institutional and non-institutional regulation were seen as synonymous. Indeed, as Leiserson commented, prior to Mathewson's study in the United States:

"Unionism, it was assumed, made possible the collective action necessary to bring about any important restrictions."

(Leiserson in Mathewson (1969) p.161)

This view has now been called into question. Richard Price (1980), examining the process whereby the power of trade unions in the building trade increased in the nineteenth century along with the development of collective bargaining, noted that this was accompanied by a decline in unilateral regulation on the part of both management and men. He concludes however that the 'gains' accruing to labour from 'consensus', and the increased authority/status of the Movement's institutions, as well as

the benefits workers won by formal bargaining, cannot be assumed as unproblematic. It is necessary to evaluate "what is bought and what is sold" (p.190). And in his assessment the employers "bought" the workers' bargaining power. As the formalised system of joint regulation with its procedural and substantive collective bargaining and conciliation arrangements was developed; and as the unions achieved viability and sources of support that were external to a membership, which they had increasingly to be able to control, the workers' independent bargaining strength and resources based on the controls exercised by work groups over the job were reduced, and their decision-making powers were both diminished and constrained by procedures. As a result, the membership lost bargaining strength vis a vis management at the workplace. They also lost power in relation to their own organisations. Price shows how, increasingly, they were unable to counteract the disciplinary control exerted by the unified and powerful employer/union authority structure.

This view of the strength of the institution being not only 'not synonymous' with but 'in opposition' to the power of workers/members has been posed - for the present day - quite starkly by Herdin (1972) who examines the proposition that a rise in union power in the plant is associated with a decline in power and control exercised by workers on the shopfloor. His is a detailed study of shopfloor problems and issues and union bargaining practices and agreements covering a number of major American plants in the late 1960s. He is able to illustrate, with a number of concrete examples, the decline in effectivity of work rules and increased power of management on the shopfloor being accompanied by the growth in scope and elaboration of formal bargaining structures and agreements. This consequence he associates with the 'passive/responding'



character of bargaining and representational structures patterned on the (Anglo-American) collective bargaining model, which he contrasts with the more 'active/initiating' character of institutions based on the (German) 'co-determination' type.

How is this relationship between collective bargaining and job control to be explained? These writers are not simply describing the supercession of autonomous or unilateral regulation by joint regulation but - at least on the workers' side - its demolition. The reasons (and the processes) are clearly complex. They include aspects we have mentioned, such as the 'mis-fit' or inappropriateness of representational structures and procedures for job control issues. And also, importantly, the form of bargaining by which employers secure agreement to changes in working practices where they cannot impose them. They also include the institution's interest in preserving the bargaining relationship by imposing discipline on the membership in order to secure adherence to agreements (and employers' control demands); as well as to secure the strength of the 'common-rule' against sectional interests which might otherwise undermine the strength of the wider collectivity.

The process discussed by the above authors is one whereby workers who have established job controls, lose them - as both a direct consequence of employers' actions (mediated or not through the union), and as an indirect consequence of institutional forms of collective action being imposed. But what happens after that? And what are the implications of collective bargaining for workers who did not have such 'explicitly recognisable' job controls in the first place? What we really need to have some view of is the impact of collective bargaining on workers' capacity to develop and sustain job controls rather than simply the impact on the controls themselves.

This is where we would argue it is important to examine the impact of the employers' actions/demands on workers' relationships with each other - because it is the social basis of the controls which is crucial. Where this is preserved, controls may be quickly developed over new production processes and machinery etc., despite the fact that these have demolished old skills and expertise. (See Hinton (1973) for example who discusses the success of skilled engineering workers in "following the machine"; and Cockburn (1983) regarding the compositors' retention of control over new printing technology.) But, we would maintain, where the social basis of job control is disrupted, the effects are more long-term. And for some workers, managements' actions never allow this to become properly consolidated. (Although this is not without contradictory consequences for production and the employer - as we show in this study.)

Insofar therefore as we would view collective bargaining as constituting a process whereby employers' demands are 'distributed downwards' to be borne by the workforce, and that these demands usually comprise 'control' questions concerned with increasing productivity, changing working processes/practices and/or the social organisation of production we would see these as bearing important implications for workers' capacity to develop and sustain job controls i.e. for their non-institutional bargaining resources.

However, we also need to consider the relationship the other way round. What is the impact of differential job control on institutional relationships and structures? Sections and groups within the labour force derive differential power from non-institutional sources - for example, the labour market, the mode of organisation of the labour process and certain more (or less) key positions within it. It seems obvious to

say that the more powerful groups, in terms of the labour process, will dominate the institutional structures and the trade union organisation itself. But we would argue it is important to ask - with what effect, in particular, for other groups?

This is where we would maintain that it is important to examine those bargaining processes internal to the workers' side which are both prior to and consequent upon the meeting between representatives of the union and the employer. And, insofar as we would view collective bargaining as distributing costs and benefits, we would see these as being distributed unequally. Those groups in a stronger bargaining position being better able to reap a greater share of the reward and to avoid the greatest impact of the 'costs' involved.

#### The hypothesis

We have been examining the main conceptual terms of an analysis adequate to explain the position of women in the union through an examination of the relationship between the sexually differentiated relations of employment on the one hand and those sex-related differences clearly patterning institutional structures on the other.

We have proposed that in order to do this it is necessary to consider the relationship between institutional and non-institutional sources and forms of regulation in the employment relationship. It is therefore necessary, first to understand the essentially distributive nature of the dominant institutional form of collective bargaining itself. Secondly, to evaluate the content of joint-bargaining (for example, by examining the substantive terms of agreements) giving proper weight to what is conceded in relation to what is gained by either side; to see how this may be structured by the predominant forms of interest representation and articulation, and also to assess the implications of

the 'exchange' for the subsequent bargaining position of the parties concerned. Finally, it is necessary to consider how the structuring of bargaining relationships patterns the outcome: that is, how the distribution of power between the bargaining parties shapes the distribution of costs and benefits, and with what effect.

Here we have been particularly concerned to establish that our view of bargaining relationships must comprehend not only that between workers and employers but, crucially, between workers themselves. And it is an assumption fundamental to our argument that both of these relationships are characterised by systematic inequalities of power.

As a consequence of this we would assume that in the first place labour can be made to bear more of the 'costs of capital' (than vice versa) through a system of joint regulation: to the extent that these are the more easily passed on as a result of gross inequalities of power between capital and labour which are institutionalised in the bargaining process. (And it has to be borne in mind that employers only have to negotiate the imposition of these costs "at the margin" because they already retain their unilateral 'managerial prerogatives'). We do not preclude there being particular historical conjunctures when the 'terms of trade' may be pushed slightly the other way. From our point of view though, this may be less significant than the fact that any bargain entails the exchange of costs as well as benefits. And it is with the nature and distribution of these, particularly on labour's side, that this study is chiefly concerned. Thus, it should not necessarily be supposed that those benefits accruing to labour will be distributed equally within labour's ranks. Nor, indeed, that any costs, however grudgingly or willingly acquiesced, will be equally borne. For certain sections may be better placed than others to avoid their impact, and to gain at, what may turn out to be, another group's expense.

All these strands of our argument can now be drawn together and our hypothesis simply stated. As a consequence of sexual inequalities structuring class relationships the distribution of costs and benefits (effected by means of collective bargaining) within the ranks of labour will be systematically unequal. Male workers will reap a greater share of the reward. As a consequence of the competitive struggle over its distribution internally, the strongest groups will come to dominate the union's organisational structure. On the other hand, women workers are likely to bear more of the costs imposed by capital and mediated by collective bargaining - to the extent that these can be effectively passed on to them by both the employers and male workers who are in a stronger bargaining position. Given the nature of these costs, as a consequence of this distribution pattern, the women workers' bargaining resources will be reduced and their bargaining strength in relation to the employer, the trade union as an institution and other (male) workers, will be further diminished.

The dominance of strong groups of male workers in the institutional structures will result in some proportion of their gains being redistributed internally, and 'passed on' as costs to the women workers - whose capacity to reverse the direction of distribution via institutional means is correspondingly further undermined.

The relative lack of representation of women workers in the organisation in proportion to male workers and in proportion to their own numbers, and also their relative lack of bargaining strength, have thus to some degree to be seen as an outcome. They are a consequence of the institutionalisation of both the distribution of costs and benefits between workers and employers and their unequal distribution within the ranks of labour, by collective bargaining processes.

Moreover, it should be clear that such an outcome as we have hypothesised need not be seen as being confined to women (although the power relationship between men and women is a highly particular one). Our proposition that the actions of stronger groups can serve to weaken further the position of the less strong, when both 'compete' in an arena which 'assumes' their equality - has a general relevance.

Apart from the direct implications for groups of workers, we also need to consider the impact of those processes and relationships discussed on the organisation and the institutional structures. And this constitutes the second strand of our hypothesis. We would propose that the distribution of costs as well as benefits between workers and employers on the one hand, and on unequal distribution of these within labour's ranks on the other, will render the institutional structures of bargaining and representation increasingly unresponsive to the membership as a whole and to certain sectors of it in particular.

In the first place, there is the institutional need to sustain the bargaining relationship, which exerts the requirement that agreements are 'kept' and 'costs' (arising from the employer) are borne on the members' side. But this relationship is inherently instable because the employers' demands are also the source of the members' problems, needs and demands - which are processed through the same representational structures. Thus considerable control may have to be exerted through the members' own organisations over themselves, to sustain stability in the bargaining relationship at an institutional level.

In the second place, unequal distribution on the members' side also renders internal relationships unstable. Stronger groups strive to secure domination of the organisational structures in order to secure

their gains, and weaker groups seek to effect a change in the pattern of distribution in their favour. Again the need for stability engenders a requirement for increasingly strong institutional controls over the membership as a whole.

The overall consequence of both of these we would surmise, is a continuous process of "undemocracy" and increasing bureaucratic control. Although this has also to be seen in relation to an equally persistent process of democratisation as groups in the membership - such as the women members today - attempt to increase the responsiveness of their organisations to their needs.

This view of institutional 'responsiveness' (and the processes which determine it) is important if we are attempting to explain the strength and effectiveness of - in this case - women workers in relation to trade unions or their employers. Because this can only be properly assessed if we have some view of the bargaining strength and resources required. And, if, as may be the case given the predominant pattern of distribution proposed, the representational and bargaining structures are rendered particularly unresponsive from such as the women's point of view, these processes clearly must constitute a significant part of our analysis.

Footnotes

- (1) See Joseph White (1978).
- (2) It could be argued that a further set of relationships - that between the 'rank and file' and the 'bureaucracy' - should be listed here because it is so crucial to shaping trade union organisation and practice. But despite their significance we have not designated these as 'primary' in the same sense because they are constituted by the institution in the first instance.

These relationships are important in this thesis however, as we are concerned with examining (the processes of) trade union democracy - and in explaining patterns of power and control within the organisation. Our approach is informed by Herding's critique of writers whose perspective is limited by the framework of organisation theory. This seeks to explain organisational behaviour in terms of internal structures and fails - in relation to trade unions - because it can neither accommodate these organisations' bases in relations of conflict or their essentially mediating role. Herding (1972) pp.65-70. We would therefore argue that the internal structure of power within trade unions can only be explained by analysis combining inter and intra-organisational relationships.

"The actual government of a trade union really depends on the relationships between three groups: its full-time officials, that proportion of its lay members which takes an active part in the union's management and the usually more passive majority of the rank and file."

Turner (1962) p.289

To which we would add a fourth - the employers and increasingly, a fifth - the state through its intervening agencies.

- (3) These three aims are linked in the sense that they are all central to the wage workers' interest in self-protection which is also, since the commodity is indivisible from the individual, an interest in preserving their capacity to labour. There is nothing, bar their struggle, to stop the employer destroying this capacity by, for example, "consuming labour" at too rapid a rate or subjecting workers to injurious conditions.
- (4) "We do believe that it is useful to subject agreements to analysis in terms of both sides of the employment relationship: achievement and reward." (McKensie and Hunter (1973) p.116) emphasis in original



PART TWO

WOMEN IN PRODUCTION

CHAPTER 3 INTRODUCING THE FIRM AND ITS WORKFORCE

This chapter is an introduction to the firm and the workforce which made it successful. It is divided into three parts. First, there is a brief profile of the company: outlining the product, where it was produced and where it was sold. It is soon clear that this market environment posed some tricky problems for the manufacturer. But BSR, for a decade flourished, rather in the manner of a cuckoo, in this highly competitive "nest". The company's development is charted in a short history which, taking us up to 1981, is marked by three periods of rapid and dramatic growth, decline and re-establishment. While the story still continues, the stage has now been shifted to the other side of the world. Our study is situated in what turned out to be BSR's two most successful years of production in this country.

The workforce was (and still is) predominantly female. In the second part of this chapter we outline the labour force structure and ask, why did this employer require women workers? Noting that the employment profile of female labour generally is, in many ways, distinctive, we are particularly interested in what patterns the employers' requirements and, therefore, his demand for (female) labour in the market. We find that aspects such as price and availability are important considerations, as are the costs of its utilisation or consumption in the labour process. But the analytical focus cannot stop at this point. And we argue that it is only when the employer's use of labour power in the labour process and demand in the labour market is seen in relation to those other markets wherein they are sellers, that the specific characteristics of female as averse to male labour power can be

comprehended. Broadening our focus, therefore, to a perspective which views how both labour and product markets are mediated through the labour process, we look at how BSR's labour-force "requirements" were patterned. One consequence of this perspective is that questions about the costs for the employer of "stable" and "unstable characteristics" attributed to different sections of the labour force, have to be re-posed. For example, labour force "stability", where the employer requires "flexibility" is problematic. We then go on to look more closely at how the different pattern of "requirements" is translated by the employer into a complex and changing labour force structure, by examining the use of full-time and part-time workers at BSR.

But maintaining a focus on the needs and requirements of the employer is insufficient, if we are also interested to explore the problems and needs of the workforce. Can we assume that the flexibility and stability which the employment of married women in particular affords, is unproblematic from the latter's point of view? Indeed we find that a shift of perspective again has the consequence of re-posing questions: and this time about the meaning and costs of "flexibility" in relation to the recruitment of women workers. (In later chapters we go on to note the costs (to themselves) of the flexible utilisation and disposition of their labour power as well).

It is not surprising to find such shifts in meaning associated with an alteration of perspective. Because in both instances where we note this occurs, the focus of attention is on relationships which are essentially contradictory under the capitalist mode of production. In the first place there is a contradiction between

the order and regulation prevailing in the workplace and the anarchy of market relations outside, and this underpins our view of how both Markets are mediated through the labour process. In the second place, there is a fundamental contradiction between the interests specified and priorities imposed by capital accumulation and those of our human condition. And this underpins our view of women workers' position as being the most crucial of all, because it is through them that these contradictory needs are mediated.

Thus each of the following chapters is divided into (at least) two parts, and the implications of management's production policy is in each case (re)considered from the (women) workers' point of view. We begin, however, with this introduction to the firm and the workforce which was recruited.

PART 1:

THE FIRM

In 1977, when the study began, BSR employed 16,000 people. There were 10,000 full-time workers in addition to which, some 6,000 - a high proportion - were employed on a part-time basis. They made record-changers and record player mechanisms for "original equipment manufacturers" (known as the OEM sector), that is the production of parts for incorporation into record players produced by other manufacturers with their own brand name.

As it had grown, the group had diversified into household consumer goods - holloware (pots and pans) and electrical appliances - so they now also made Swan electric kettles and Goblin "teasmade" and vacuum cleaners. But the sound reproduction division remained dominant, employing some 10,000 people, most of them women in five factories. Four of these were grouped within a few miles of each other in part of the Birmingham "Black Country", Cradley Heath and Stourbridge; the other, opened in 1964, was located at East Kilbride, situated in the new town's trading estate. It is with the Birmingham factories, that this study is mainly concerned.

THE FACTORIES

The bulk of production came from three of the four factories. From these was produced complete record changers - the reliable, "mass-produced" low cost units - which were the basic, electric motor driven, mechanical models. The largest output and greatest number of "lines" came from the Stourbridge factory, with Old Hill (the original plant) next and Waterfall Lane (from 1969) producing on a much smaller scale. However, these three plants were also

technologically inter-dependent: the automatic machine shop at Old Hill produced most of the turned metal parts, the motors were made at Waterfall Lane, and the polystyrene plant at Stourbridge produced packing materials for the group. The fourth factory, Garratts Lane, was a new site, only opened in February 1976, where production of new models to compete at the "top end" of the electronic hi-fi market (and also vacuum cleaners), was just beginning and not yet fully established.

Two characteristics of the "Black Country" factories are worth noting from the outset. First, the majority of BSR's Sound Reproduction Division employees were women. Of the 8,000 people working in these Birmingham factories, under 2,000 were men. Secondly, the workers made and assembled record-player components from scratch and in such large numbers, that very few parts were bought in from outside. (Management boasted at one time, that the only thing they couldn't make cheaper themselves, were the screws).

#### PRODUCTION AND ASSEMBLY

The largest amount of fixed capital in terms of plant and machinery was utilised in the basic production processes, whereby individual parts were created from the raw materials. These processes included: plastic moulding <sup>(1)</sup> (machinery operated by women workers); polystyrene expansion (plant operated by male workers); and metal working (performed by men and women workers) which involved machining, stamping and pressing components, most of which went through further treatment processes, e.g. plating or painting (involving both men and women workers), prior to assembly.

In contrast to the basic production processes, assembly operations were highly labour intensive and entirely carried out by women. In the sub-assemblies individual parts were put together with glue, screws or solder, using little machinery. In the main, the women worked with smaller bench tools or by hand alone, constructing the basic components of the mechanism such as the turntable or the pick-up arm. They mostly worked in groups at benches, passing the work along. But some, particularly the smaller components, were assembled by individual women working at separate stations. Final construction of the whole mechanism was done by women assembling the basic components on a moving track. This was considered by both management and workers as the hardest and most stressful work, and young girls were especially liable to find themselves on this job. The unit was built up, held in the framework of a jig, at stations along the conveyor. Tested and inspected on the way, it was packed complete as it came off the end of the line.

#### MARKETS

About 90% of record player production was exported: 70% going to the USA and around 10% each going to Europe and Japan. But while European sales seemed relatively steady over the decade 1969-1979, rapid expansion in the Japanese market indicated that this was developing as the company's second largest export area. Producing in very high volume, low cost units with a narrow profit margin on each, by the mid-1970's BSR had managed to establish virtually a world-wide monopoly, supplying record changers and components to manufacturers of complete record players at the cheap end of the market. (2)

Ability to produce units in sufficiently high numbers was a crucial aspect of success both in terms of the maintenance of profit levels (as the margin on each unit was cut) and market dominance. A commanding position, whereby most major customers would be fully supplied, seemed to require production levels of around 150,000 to 185,000 units per week (at the "right price") in the early - mid-1970's. BSR management built up productive capacity under stringent cost controls in order to achieve this. Output levels increased staggeringly. In 1962 the group produced around 30,000 units per week. In 1977-8 they made 250,000 per week, supplying 20-30 different types of record changer/player.

In this competitive arena, however, market dominance can bring only fragile security. BSR faced two particular problems: the control of retail outlets by large-scale corporations and seasonal product demand. Apart from the fact that such consumer goods markets as this are notoriously unstable, this sphere was dominated by massive retail corporations, such as Tandy, both in the USA and Japan. With international chains controlling the bulk distribution outlets, these retailers - powerful customers, from the producer's point of view - constitute the market itself. They deny, even to a monopoly producer, that degree of security which can be derived from some direct market control and competition between customers. Indeed, such is the retailer's power, where they exert dominant control over distribution, that the producer can be put under constant pressure. These powerful customers then, taking huge bulk consignments on short-period orders, could instantly pass on the consequences of a fall in demand or loss of competitiveness with devastating results for the producer.



Moreover, the pattern of demand was far from even. The peak selling period was Christmas. Accordingly, orders built up in the spring and summer and hopefully, production was full-scale into autumn. In December and the New Year, however, the market was dead for at least three months, picking up in the spring - April, May - then again after the June Trade Fair, where new styles were launched, in what was also a fickle and fashion conscious market. Where retailers are unable or disinclined to hold stocks, large-scale producers are forced to do so themselves; if only because they could not otherwise fulfill the massive orders in time when they eventually came.

For this reason, BSR wholly-owned a dozen subsidiary distribution companies covering every part of the world where the product was sold in appreciable numbers. All production in the early part of the year was built for stock - a time of tension until orders flowed once again. Hit by the American recession in 1974-75, for example, the company was left holding some 10 million units in stock. Production for stock imposes, if anything, greater pressures on cost control, since warehousing increases the unit cost and it may, ultimately, be necessary to lower prices still more, in order to clear them.

It is apparent, therefore, even from this brief over-view, that BSR management were continuously under a great deal of pressure to maintain efficiency in order to preserve both their profits and their markets; in a sphere of intense competition between existing producers jostling to find space for further growth through market expansion. In addition, the possibilities of production at the "lower-end" of the market proved a constant attraction to

manufacturers in third-world countries. Initially, no doubt because the relatively low levels of technology involved with mechanical players and the labour, rather than capital, intensive nature of the production process.

"We had some visitors from Korea the other day - we only showed them a very small part of our production area, but now we have it on good authority that they will only be customers of ours for a couple of years. Then they will become our competitors".

Tony Stuart (Industrial Relations Director) (3)

#### BSR: A Short History

Given problems such as these, the firm succeeded to quite an improbable degree - as a short history of the company will show. This can be divided into three immediate periods which followed upon some 10 years of steady growth.

The original company, founded in 1932, by a Dr Daniel Macdonald made medical equipment and only began making automatic record changers in 1952, before going public in 1957. 10 years later a "palace revolution" installed John Ferguson, the company secretary (ex-Ceylon tea plantation) as managing director and chairman of the Board. However, it took until 1971 to buy the Macdonald family out of BSR, and in the meantime the founder had set up another company, Glenburn, in direct competition with the original firm - declaring that he "was only in production of record changers to reduce the swollen heads of others in the field". An aggressive, anti-union and autocratic employer, Macdonald finally sold Glenburn to BSR for £4 million in 1975 and took himself off to Switzerland.

PERIOD OF RAPID GROWTH: 1971-1976/77

The company maintained an impressive record of growth in the decade to 1976. Profits in 1966 were £1.8million. Around 1971-2 however, they really started to take-off, and by 1976 profits reached a record level of £28.8 million.

At this point, the firm owned a string of companies, having bought up some essential suppliers as part of a process of vertical integration; set up subsidiaries abroad which were basically selling organisations; and taken over manufacturers such as Bulpitts (Swan brand) in 1971, and Goblin in 1975, in an effort to diversify into household goods. (5) These latter efforts, however, failed to rescue the company from excessive reliance on a very narrow base, partly because of the domestic market doldrums in this period.

Production of autochangers for export markets on the other hand expanded rapidly. Between 1972 and 1976 the company's turnover increased by over 25% and profits by nearly 50%. The Sound Reproduction Division continued to contribute some 80% of total turnover and a good 90% of total profits in these years. The main centres of production for this division were two factories in the West Midlands, Old Hill and Stourbridge (both of which were enlarged 1971-72), and one at East Kilbride.

Highly susceptible to fluctuations in the American economy, BSR was hit by the 1974-5 recession. 1800 workers were made redundant and the rest put on a short working week from January, until stocks were cleared and orders picked up - well into the Spring. Management made the most of this opportunity to rationalise

their operations and quickly shed "unnecessary" labour. Ultimately business picked up extremely rapidly and maximum profits and output were achieved between 1976-77.

The company, holding 60% of the world market for record-changers, now looked "up-market" for further growth, launching, in February 1976, an expensive unit called Accutrac incorporating new electronic features. Record tracks could be selected automatically with a remote control transmitter, by means of an electronic eye in the pick-up arm and a computerised memory bank. Production began at Garretts Lane, a newly built factory - but it was not easy to break in to the competitive hi-fi arena.

#### RAPID DECLINE 1978-80

Sales slumped again in 1978 with another American recession, but now the high pound and interest rates cut back cost-competitiveness, and the Japanese began to move in - aided by a weak yen and selling at a loss (it was believed) - to capture the low-price markets. From April 1979 BSR's workforce was on a short week and in November one of the 3 plants at East Kilbride was closed with the loss of 1,000 jobs. The company made a loss that year, but took steps to cut back production at an extremely rapid rate. The situation did not improve. By 1980 the yen was weaker and the pound stronger against the dollar, further diminishing cost-competitiveness, reflected in loss of sales.

In addition, other trends were working against the company. The U.S. hi-fi market was especially depressed because the "youth bulge" had worked its way through, diminishing the younger (15-25) age group which bought so-called "medium-fi" players.

More significantly, over the past 2 years fashion had definitely begun to swing away from mechanical auto-changers to low-cost electronic music-centres incorporating single play, direct drive turntables (as in hi-fi) and cassette players.

Looking to develop new products, the company bought into a Hong Kong electronics firm, Astec International, and advertised two new lines: DBX "hiss suppressors" for tapes (in competition with Dolby) and X-10 remote control "energy-switches" for electronic equipment and lighting, which had been developed with the Accutrac hi-fi unit.

But their main-stay, the changer-market, was dead and throughout 1980 workers were on short time and management continued to "shed labour", the vast majority of them women.<sup>(6)</sup> In February 1980, 1200 in the West Midlands were made redundant and in June, the Waterfall Lane factory (once employing 1,500) was closed when a further 2,300 were laid-off. 1,700 of these redundancies were at East Kilbride, where changer production was finished altogether and the "Macdonald Electric" factory closed down (BSR with a workforce of 2,500 - mostly young women, had once been the new town's second largest employer).

The rapidity with which these adjustments had been made impressed the stock market which continued to show confidence in the company, despite appalling financial results. They liked what they called the company's "leaner" appearance. In October 1980 BSR were still producing 90,000 units a week, (with even cheaper new lines) and following stringent rationalisation, even more "efficiently" than before. In addition, the household products

division (also "slimmed down") had held up fairly well. Over the year the total work-force declined from 15,418 to 10,958, with the loss of 4,500 jobs.

At the beginning of 1981 BSR announced greater financial losses, £17½ million. Sales of both audio equipment and consumer products had continued to fall - the latter being sold at a loss in order to maintain market position during the current UK recession. For shareholders, there was at last, however, a ray of sunshine - in the East.

RE-ESTABLISHMENT 1981 -

"BSR is tackling the problems of a falling market and a strong pound by moving out to use cheaper labour in a different product area".  
Financial Times 9.5.81

The company had begun a rapid evacuation of capital into the new international (non-consumer) electronics field with the acquisition in May 1980 of a majority-holding in Astec International, the Hong Kong computer power-pack subsidiary - where business was booming. This factory, making microprocessor (chip) controlled switchgear and computer equipment and selling to North American based computer companies, had been considerably expanded within twelve months of its purchase. And in May 1981 it was announced that BSR was buying Capetronic International Corporation, with five factories in Taiwan and one in Chicago. At the time of acquisition the firm produced a range of cassette-receivers, clock radios and other "high-volume" consumer items. It was planned to run this side of production down as the computer business expanded. The company was to be integrated with Astec International to produce a range of computer - peripherals: switching systems, monitors, printers and

terminals. Announcing this purchase the chairman, John Ferguson, noted "the resulting far-eastern division of BSR will have 0.7m sq.ft of factory space and employ more than 5,000 people" (Financial Times 6.5.81).

In one bound, it seems, BSR had shifted capital to a new labour force, new territory, new political state, new technology, new product, and new customers in non-consumer markets. As the Glasgow Herald ruefully observed:

"In a short space of time BSR will effectively become a Far Eastern electronics group".  
Glasgow Herald 6.5.81.

We now go on to introduce the workforce on which the company's development in this country had been based.

PART 2: THE WORKFORCE

A predominant characteristic of the capitalist mode of production is the contrast between order and regulation prevailing within the workplace and the anarchy of market relations outside. BSR provides a good example of this relationship: the firm's position as seller in a highly competitive, unregulated and unstable product market called for a high degree of regulation and control within the production process. Prior to this, however, a producer has also to operate in the market as a buyer, purchasing both materials and labour power.

In this part, the relationship between the firm as a buyer and consumer of labour power is examined in order to explain some aspects of the labour force structure. Why did this employer require women workers?

STRUCTURE

BSR was heavily dependent on women workers both full-time and part-time. Just how dependent they were on the latter is shown in table 1.

From 1965 to 1977, the numbers employed part-time never fell below 35% and usually it was closer to, or above, 40%. This was clearly a conscious policy to expand part-time working since the actual number of part-time workers trebled in this period.

Such overall figures tend to obscure local variations and Table 2 shows the disproportionate dependence of the three main Black Country factories on part-time work. In 1977, some 55% of the hourly paid workers did less than 37½ hours per week, the vast majority being women workers, of whom 65% worked part-time. As Table 3 shows,



THE WORKFORCE

TABLE 1: BSR WORKFORCE 1968-79, SHOWING FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME WORKERS.

	<u>Total Employees</u>			
	Full-time	Part-time	TOTAL	%Part-time
1968	2910	1992	4902	41
1969	2990	2276	5266	43
1970	3126	2451	5577	44
1971	6413	3440	9853	35
1972	7897	4388	12285	36
1973	10326	5702	16028	36
1974	10239	6474	16713	39
1975	8135	5319	13454	40 )
1976	10090	5932	16022	37 ) steady
1977	10106	5593	15699	36 ) reduction
1978	10841	5238	16079	33 )
1979	11600	4731	16331	29 )

Source: Company Reports.

Table 2: COMPOSITION OF BSR LABOUR FORCE BY SEX AND HOURS WORKED IN 3 WEST MIDLAND FACTORIES AT OCTOBER 1977

	Hours per week	Old Hill	Waterfall Lane	Stourbridge	TOTAL	
F E M A L E	40	813	268	1191	2272	
	27½	247	34	393	674 )	
	22½	367	199	504	1070 )	
	21½	-	215	-	215 )	
	20	343	144	820	1307 )	4191
	17½	354	197	374	925 )	
		2124	1057	3282	6463	
M A L E	40	342	45	304	691 )	
	37½	150	215	139	504 )	1195
	22½	-	9	-	9 )	
	20	27	-	14	41 )	69
	17½	-	7	12	19 )	
		519	276	469	1264	
		2643	1333	3751	7727	

Source: Inbucon (1977)

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE BSR WORKFORCE EMPLOYED FOR UNDER 30HRS  
PER WEEK AT 3 WEST MIDLAND FACTORIES (OCTOBER 1977)

	<u>Old Hill</u>	<u>Waterfall Lane</u>	<u>Stourbridge</u>
Females as % females employed	62%	75%	64%
Males as % males employed	5%	6%	6%
TOTAL 430 hrs as % total employed	55%		

Source: Inbucon (1977)

in one factory, Waterfall Lane, 75% of the women worked part-time. Taking the three factories together, 84% of the workforce were women.

#### RECRUITMENT

"The company has (also) been very flexible in its recruitment policies and has attracted and retained a lot of its workers by tapping sources not much drawn on by other companies. It recruits a lot of older women. Although it prefers full-time employees for most jobs, it offers part-time work as well and is very flexible about the hours that can be worked in order to attract married women with young children (...) the company has undertaken recruitment drives at places up to 10 to 15 miles away. By these means it has been able to achieve the increases in manpower (sic) ... despite the difficulties in recruiting women for full-time work in East Kilbride".  
CIR (1970) p.5

BSR required stable reserves of low-priced labour from which sufficient numbers could be drawn to facilitate rapid expansion when required - both for seasonal variations and to fuel the company's period of growth. Women workers provided such a reserve.

First, seasonal requirements were traditionally met by the crop of female school-leavers who were regularly available just at the time the company was planning full production to meet the new season's orders. The chairman's comments (in February 1976) illustrate this pattern:

"I'm confident for the rest of the year. If the economy picks up, we'll have to increase production still further, but we're not taking such action yet. We'll get a boost from school leavers and then we'll boost production in the second half of the year. But now - at the moment, we're concentrating on building up stocks".  
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But, secondly, growth in the longer term required more complex developments. By 1979 BSR as a whole employed over 16,000 people (see Table 1), some 300% above that of ten years earlier. This expansion had taken place at an extremely rapid rate: between 1968 and 1973 - in five years alone - growth in employment was around 270%. The BSR approach was to seek and achieve an expansion of the labour force, as the CIR points out, in three main ways: widening the sphere of recruitment; laying on coaches to bring workers in from outlying areas; and by running a variety of part-time shifts which brought in the women who were not available for full-time hours. (8)

Consequently, labour force structure was extremely complicated. Just over one third of 6,500 hourly paid women workers in the 3 West Midlands factories worked full-time in 1977. The full eight hour day ran from 8 a.m. - 4.45 p.m., with  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr unpaid lunch and a ten minute break in the morning and afternoon. Nearly 50% of the part-time women workers were employed on "Morning" (8 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.) and "afternoon" (1.15 p.m. - 4.45 p.m.) shifts, making up "full-time equivalents". (9) A further 16% worked the "school mothers" shifts (9.30 a.m. - 3.30 p.m. with 30 minute unpaid lunch break) of 27 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours. Finally, one third of the women part-timers worked a four hour shift (6.0 a.m. - 10 a.m., 10.0 a.m. - 2.0 p.m., 2.0 p.m. - 6.0 p.m. or 6.0 p.m. - 10.0 p.m) which meant a 20 hour week. (10)

The employer's demand for women workers

Given the need for labour which is both abundant and cheap, it is not difficult to explain this employer's decision to purchase female labour power, if only because of its price and availability in the market. But are these the sole criteria underlying this choice? When, for example, the company opened a factory in Londonderry, employment subsidies were only available for young males - also in cheap and abundant supply. These workers were not found satisfactory however, and it is clear that BSR preferred to employ women workers in certain areas of production. It would, therefore, seem necessary to examine more closely the structure of employers' demand for female labour. (11)

It is apparent, for example, that large areas of employment are closed to women in general such as certain industries, types of work and work relations. They are largely excluded, for instance, from employment which entails some degree of autonomy or authority and particularly so, from positions of control - either direct, or mediated by the operation of machinery - over the activities of men. Crowded as women then are, within the narrow range of occupations open to them, the type of work which is offered varies little. Thus manual factory work designated "women's" everywhere involves repetition of "minimal" tasks in a controlled environment for low pay. Thus, structured demand and the consequent lack of alternatives, do to an important extent, themselves ensure a high degree of availability (and therefore "docility") of female labour for such kinds of work. It does not, however, necessarily explain the kind of work made available, and neither does the women's availability by itself explain the employers' demand for them to do it.

The consequences of gender divisions in the labour market for female workers are plain to see - because women occupy such highly specific areas of employment (they are also the most highly exploitative). But the causes of this patterning and the processes underlying it are less adequately understood. The main reason is probably because such explanations as are provided tend toward circularity, relying on a description of (women's) supply-side characteristics - from which the employer's demand patterns are simply read off. (i.e. they "demand" the type of labour which is available), e.g. Barron and Norris (1976). But what precisely is required? And what patterns these requirements? Hence the usual approach does nothing to explain why some employers are more dependent than others on female labour. Nor why employers in specific industrial sectors are increasingly so dependent. Both of which, female growth patterns in national and International labour force statistics indicate to be the case. (12)

We would, therefore, argue that in order to analyse women's employment patterns more adequately it is necessary to examine more exactly how the "demand and supply sides" of the female labour market are linked. This, of necessity, must also entail taking a more sophisticated view of the former, especially. Thus, while the purchase and sale of labour power, taking place in the sphere of circulation, can be considered separately, at the theoretical level, from its utilisation or consumption within the labour process, there remain, nevertheless, definite links between the pattern of employers' demand for and their use of labour. The main criteria governing the purchase of labour power in the market concern its availability and price. Ultimately, however, it is the cost of labour in relation to the final product (i.e. its productivity)

which is crucial to profitability. In this way, the labour market (purchase of labour power) and labour process (consumption of labour power) are brought together.

An example of how the two are conceptually linked already can be seen in relation to absenteeism and labour turnover. These terms, which refer to quitting and layoffs occurring at the instigation of workers rather than employers, together largely constitute the concept of "labour (market) instability". And the dominant conception has this inextricably linked with labour's higher costs of consumption. Thus, while both are aspects of workers' labour market behaviour (when and where their labour is offered) they are nevertheless, considered to incur costs for employers through a destabilising impact on the labour process (which is ultimately reflected in lower productivity). We would argue that there are problems with this assessment.

What are the sources of such "instability"? This tends to vary with gender: such "instability" among male workers is usually associated with (temporary) labour market features such as high wages and full employment; whereas amongst female workers, explanations focus on fixed supply-side characteristics viz their domestic responsibilities. Perhaps the main reason the latter are judged the more costly to employ is because they deviate furthest from the concept of "free wage labour".

The specific employment characteristics attached to different groups of workers - male, female, married, single -selling their labour on the market can all be more broadly related to the common underlying factor of economic need, the support of individuals or of non wage-earners within the family, being primarily (although to a varying degree) dependent on the wage income of "free wage



labourers". It is this dependence that underpins the concept of workers' "commitment to employment" - most directly associated with notions of "labour stability" and its "costs of consumption" for employers. Clearly, however, this will vary with workers' differing relationships to this support system (and that provided by the state, for example). Viewed at this level, women workers, whose economic dependence on an employer may be offset, to some degree, by their economic dependence on a husband, and whose own dependents may, in addition, constitute a strong alternative commitment in competition with their own employment, must serve to qualify a simple free (male) wage labour model. But because they are viewed as "deviant", the specificity of their situation and the implications of this (does it necessarily make their labour more costly to consume?), together with differentiations within their own ranks, remain unexplored beyond a superficial level, both theoretically and empirically. As a result the nature of employers' specific demand for female labour remains inadequately explained.

Yet neither, it would appear, is the specificity of the employers situation examined in any way that can adequately explain (beyond its low purchase price), why some are more dependent than others on female labour. As a result, in many discussions about the employment of female labour, the impression is given that this choice by employers is in the nature of a last resort. That under "normal circumstances" they would prefer male workers, but because of full employment, for example these workers are unavailable and/or too expensive. A female workforce is more readily available and at a lower price, but at considerable cost to themselves, employers have to tinker with working hours, and tolerate higher absenteeism and labour turnover.

Women workers are, therefore, considered contradictory in that their labour power is cheap to buy but, apparently, more expensive to consume.

"In these circumstances (recruiting older women and women with young children) it was only to be expected that one of the prices the company has to pay has been a relatively high rate of labour turnover". CIR (1970) p.5 (my emphasis).

On the other hand, there may be more complex links between the employer's demand for and use of female labour. This is where arguments referring to women's apparently inherent, sex-related attributes of "docility" and "dexterity", are often to be found. Although comparative studies confirming that lower labour costs do, consistently, derive specifically from these sources (rather than the low pay rates these valuable attributes are rewarded with), are difficult to find. (13) In any case, we need to ask: are these "special attributes", or indeed, any other so called sex-specific skills (like "caring"), the only positive reasons - apart from low wages - that would lead employers to prefer women workers?

We would argue that it is necessary to go beyond a focus on the labour process, and that only when the employer's use of labour power and demand in the labour market is seen in relation to those other markets, wherein the employers are sellers, can a full enough picture emerge. One moreover, which allows us to understand the increasing use of the labour of married women in general, in the context of complicated developments taking place in the structure of production and product markets in advanced capitalism.

We have already noted the characteristic disjuncture, which prevails overall, between "anarchy" in the commodity - labour and product - markets and regulation in the labour process. But how are both markets related and mediated through the labour process? We return to the example of BSR.

The costs of stability?

As we have seen BSR's recruitment policy was tailored as far as possible to meet production needs with the constraints of labour market supplies. Women workers, in general, offered the advantages of cheapness and availability in terms of market reserves, which could readily be drawn upon when required. At this point we can take up our earlier discussion about the links between employers' demands for and use of labour. What costs, for instance, were associated with the utilisation of women workers? What was the nature of the "labour stability" required?

Two points are worth considering immediately. First, that female labour is considered more expensive to utilise because it is more "unstable"; secondly, that the pattern of BSR's demand for labour was itself, largely unstable.

In this discussion we shall therefore have cause to question the opinion of the CIR that the high turnover of women workers was "a price the company had to pay".

In the "bad old days", Macdonald had a straightforward method of coping with unwanted workers. He simply sent them down the road.

"Actually, when I went to Fry's I came here for an interview for a job and I could have had a job, they were just starting this factory then. And I know: I lived at Old Hill, where the factory was - (it was) before they built this one (...) And he used ... the girls up there used to - they'd walk home, middle of the day, and he'd sacked 500 of them like that - Macdonald. He'd just have a fit and he'd sack 500. Then he'd open up the factory and start everybody back on again, you know. What a funny fella to work for!" Madge (Moulding Shop) (14)

It could be argued that both then and now, the labour of women workers is easier to dispense with. If styles of management have changed or, in the years of expansion, the number of occasions necessitating similar action diminished, this does not alter the underlying rationale which still remains. Female labour power can be utilised more economically because the numbers employed (or total labour hours) can be rapidly adjusted according to output requirements.

".... we wanted more labour at that point in time, and we took them on. In actual fact it was an accident. They put the advert in for Garretts Lane - they intended the advert. for Garrett's Lane, and put Stourbridge's address. But we were looking for labour at the same time, so we just reaped the labour in when we wanted them. And at that time we were pushing up to a fairly high level of production for the Christmas period. It will drop off afterwards - we're not taking anybody on at all now. So natural wastage - we're losing about 20 a week, so natural wastage allows it to drop right down again. Then possibly round about April, March - when we want more output - take labour on. We are very fortunate, in the fact that there is a fairly high wastage amongst females - we can pinch further output back then, quite conveniently".

Barry White (Factory Manager) (15)

This latter feature - especially the downwards flexibility it afforded - was of utmost significance to the company, given its market environment. While periodic crises might require rapid mass redundancies (as in 1974-5), cyclical slumps could be taken care of by natural wastage in a regular and rather convenient way. Given the pressure on profit margins per unit, the amount of labour used in relation to output had to be closely controlled and constantly adjusted. Stability for a firm producing in this product market depended essentially upon the kind of flexibility which the employment of married women workers in particular, could afford. (This is not to suggest that the company's and the women's

preferences matched. As we shall see below, "natural wastage" can be a rather misleading term). Furthermore, the consistently high turnover made redundancies relatively inexpensive if they were required.

In addition to this, the employment of part-time workers especially, provided further means of adjusting the amount of labour utilised. With employees working, as a matter of course, a variety of different hours ranging between 17½ - 40 per week - some fairly fine tuning could be effected by developing or cutting ~~any~~ of half a dozen different shifts. While on "special occasions" a twilight shift could be, and was, started or stopped as required.

The company employed women rather than men because of the low price and the flexible availability of their labour: availability not only in terms of the periods for which it was required, but also because they were considered more suitable for the type of work which was demanded. This second point was clearly an important consideration which apparently overrode other aspects of female employment commonly considered a cost from the employer's point of view, such as absenteeism.

".... Women, obviously, coming back to our eternal problem - tend to have, by force of circumstances, more time off. Why it should be in this day and age, the men don't have time off to take the children to the doctors, and things - I don't know - but they don't. Obviously, they're considered still, to be the breadwinners. (Although, I will say this, there is a tendency for men to take time off, at all levels - to take boys to the doctors, children to the doctors ... I don't know if they'll wait in to see the gas-man - but, traditionally, this is the woman's responsibility). It's always been considered that women earned pin-money - therefore, they tend to have more time off than men." (No other disadvantages?) "No, I don't know of any more disadvantages. Generally they're very hard working. By their very nature, they can accept a monotonous job, or tend to ... do a monotonous job with easier mind than a man, possibly. They work that much ... well, they tend to work that much more consistently consistently. One thing they - particularly

the young ones. (Of course, not having very many boys, it isn't so obvious) but, the young girls particularly, are ill-disciplined. And it's a difficulty to discipline them".

Barry White (Factory Manager) (16)

In the quotation reproduced above, it is clear that "stability" in terms of the job relates (as does the question of labour hours) to the issue of managerial control - here expressed directly as a matter of discipline. Moreover, the concept of "women in general" in this manager's observations is soon differentiated. And, indeed, it is precisely the group most likely to produce the greatest "disadvantages" - in terms of their "unstable" labour market behaviour that render the greatest advantages of stability in terms of the actual jobs.

"The factory managers prefer middle-aged women - over 25 years. The marrieds seem to come back more stable than 16-18 year olds. So we're trying to balance it out - there's many more young girls looking for jobs than older women. On the other hand, you get trouble if you've too many young girls - like on the main lines, for example".

John Ferguson (Managing Director) (17)

The women workers clearly were not considered by their employers (as they tend to be in the literature) as a completely homogeneous group. The main distinctions generally made differentiated the younger and older workers. Managers suggested the dividing line lay "around 30". Although the (female) convenor specified marriage rather than any particular age as being significant.

"It sounds strange this ... We know the younger element have got to be given a chance, but it's a very strange thing in this factory - you find that its when the girls start to mature. ... There are girls that I can take you to, that I've known, that have left and I've worked with them when they've come out of school, and then watched them. They've got married and you've watched them mature, and its very surprising how different the girls react to work, after they have, sort of, matured into, sort of, being an adult".

(How are they different?)

"When they're younger, somehow they've got a sort of 'couldn't-care-less' attitude towards the job that they're doing. They don't seem to be able to respond to the type of discipline that's necessary - to being told anything."

Pearl (Sub-Assembly and Convenor) (18)

"I mean, each has got their own advantages and disadvantages. The older women come, they plod along with a good steady pace with a very good sense of responsibility - but they tend to have more time off because of their families. The younger ones, they're damn good workers when they're here and they put their minds to it - it's just a matter of motivating them and setting their minds to it".

Barry White (Factory Manager) (19)

The company's labour policy, informed by such (contradictory) considerations, obviously differentiated women workers quite finely and, thereby, structured the workforce - albeit within the constraints of the labour market at any particular time. Thus the composition of the workforce overall, reflected a search for "stability" in the labour process by achieving a "balance" between the different groups of women workers. The examples above show such consideration in respect of age and marital status. It also informed their racist recruitment policy:

"By virtue of the nature of the majority of white girls - you don't get, sort of ... gangs in - for want of a better word. ... We try to keep 2 or 3 coloured girls to approximately about 20 or 30 white girls, and they mix in very, very well indeed. There's been absolutely no trouble at all with coloured girls here, particularly the Asians, they get on very well indeed. The African coloureds - just that little bit less inclined to work as hard as the Asian coloureds, but certainly no problems to deal with at all. In fact, I enjoy working with the coloured girls, they are very, very good. The white girls get on just as well with the coloured girls. The coloured girls do tend to sit down and have lunch together. Yet they've got a common language, obviously, and naturally they should sit together - but that's the only ... I mean going on the lines and going down to the toilet, enjoying their work - they mix very well, so there's no problem there".

Barry White (Factory Manager) (20).

"A PRICE THE COMPANY HAD TO PAY"?

The discussion so far has indicated how an employer's demand for labour power may be identified in terms of labour market, product market and labour process criteria. Price and the flexible availability of labour power may be aspects as important to labour's economical utilisation as its "stable application" in production itself. Yet as the examples above suggest, what is meant by "stability" in this respect needs careful defining.

Those features of female labour so commonly deemed both a cost and source of instability, such as high turnover and reduced availability for full-time hours, constituted for this employer, an absolutely essential flexibility - in terms of their recruitment, utilisation and dispensation of labour. Since there was no other means of mediating product market instabilities - a lack of flexibility in any of the above respects, would have increased the costs of production for the firm, which it could not have absorbed. Thus the "instability" of the female labour force underpinned the stability of the labour process itself. And, as we pointed out earlier, this can only be seen when the employer's use of labour power is seen in relation to the market wherein they are sellers.

It also has to be seen in relation to the market wherein they are buyers. While we have pointed out the availability of workers for different "sets" of hours as constituting an important aspect of flexibility, in respect of (female) labour's utilisation; we have also indicated the importance of stability, afforded by women workers in relation to the type of work made available.



The sources of this stability, specified in terms of these workers' steady and conscientious application to what is, in effect, mindless work clearly lie less with their innate "femaleness", than their particular position in the labour market and the degree of "commitment" to their employer. Since this suffers a marked change on marriage we would suggest, therefore, that it is the peculiar vulnerability (i.e. instability) of married women in the labour market which underpins their "stability" in this, and equivalent, labour processes. (21)

An interesting point arises from the factory manager's comments, wherein the "advantages" of the "mature" women's consistent application to the work were set against the apparent disadvantages of this group in terms of their higher absenteeism. With reference to our discussion above, which calls for more specific analyses of employers' "costs" and requirements in relation to various "instabilities" (and other attributes) of different groups of workers in the labour market; we might note here, that absenteeism can be taken as a case in point. For while the unpredictable nature of the women workers' absence could, certainly, be problematic from management's point of view, the general level of absenteeism was by no means to be seen as a straight cost to the employer. As we shall see, absenteeism in fact, afforded management further opportunities to intensify the workload and reduce unit costs. It also provided a ready basis for applying disciplinary controls, which underpinned further strategies for increasing female labour's productivity.

In conclusion, we have noted above that the employment of women workers is almost exclusively discussed in terms of their

peculiar supply-side characteristics. (And generally all are assumed to be married). Yet a close examination of the employers' requirements militates against simply "reading-off" his demand patterns. Not only may costs for one employer become "benefits" for another; but as we shall go on to examine with an example concerning BSR's policy regarding part-time workers - there may be contradictory considerations to assess, when an employer's labour market transactions are viewed in relation to both the consumption of labour power in the labour process and the product market.

Recruitment policy - full-time or part-time workers

It has already been suggested that there were positive reasons for the company setting out to attract the particular group of women who comprise the majority of part-time workers (i.e. those with domestic commitments); namely, their stability in terms of the job and the stable, yet flexible nature of their availability in the market. Yet it would seem that from the mid 1970's at least, efforts were being made to reduce the numbers of employees on part-time hours.

The steady fall in part-time workers can be noted in two respects. First, in BSR as a whole between 1968 and 1974 the numbers of part-time employees increased by 300% in absolute terms, but proportionally from 1970 their share of employment had begun to fall quite rapidly from a level of 44% (see above, Table 11. This trend continued to the end of the 1970's, with only a slight hiccup around 1974-5 when large numbers of

workers - especially full-time office staff, were made redundant. Indeed, from 1974 onwards, the numbers of part-time workers had begun to fall in absolute terms, while after 1975 full-timers steadily increased. This trend was particularly marked around 1977-8 when the percentage of part-time employees fell below 35% for the first time in ten years. Secondly, looking at the employment figures for full-time and part-time workers in the two largest West Midland factories, as Table 4 shows, while between May 1976 and May 1977 the numbers in all groups (apart from the four hourly shift) showed a reduction, this was greater in respect of full-timers, possibly reflecting the market downturn which followed the 1975-6 high point. However, between April 1977 and October 1977 the impact of the seasonal upturn can be seen, where only full-timers and, again, the 4-hourly shift, showed an increase in numbers. All the rest of the part-time shifts continued to fall in number.

Why this apparent preference for full-time workers?

The Stourbridge manager gave these reasons:

"We are employing only full-timers at the moment. That means that any part-timers that leave are not being replaced as further part-timers. (Why is that?) Well, because its easier to control a factory with full-timers. If there's sufficient full-timers on the labour market, then ... it's much easier to run a factory if you have as stable a labour force as possible. (Aren't your part-timers stable?) Well, the way its easier is by the fact ...

Now, you've got a line with 70 people on it, and you have 30 part-timers (there's less than that, but say there's 30 part-timers) and you have 10 absent in the morning and 15 absent in the afternoon - then you've got to re-lay the line out at 12 o'clock or one o'clock, when they start work again. But if you have 70 operators on the line, and 20 of them are away, for any reason - and it does go as high as that on occasions - then

TABLE 4: Fluctuations in full and part-time working amongst women workers at Old Hill and Stourbridge Factories, May '76-Oct '77

	Nos. employed					% change 5/76-5/77 (Market variation)	% change 4/77-10/77 (Seasonal variation)
	May 76	Apr 77	May 77	June 77	Oct 77		
<u>HOURS WORKED</u>							
Part- time.							
27½hrs	718	663	658	651	640	-8.4	-3.5
22½hrs	967	903	894	887	871	-7.5	-3.5
20hrs	1083	1103	1092	1086	1162	+1.0	+5.4
17½hrs	838	769	760	751	728	-9.3	-5.3
Total Part- time	3606	3438	3404	3375	3401	-5.6	-1.1
Total part- time (excl 20hr Shift)	2523	2335	2312	2289	2239	-8.4	-4.1
Full- time 40hrs	2034	1845	1800	1764	2004	-11.5	+8.6
Total empl- oyed:	5640	5283	5204	5142	5405	-7.7	+2.3

Source: Inbucon (1977)

you know at five past eight what the situation is for the rest of the day. Therefore, you have a much more stable situation ..."  
Barry White (Factory Manager) (22)

The manager's arguments against the part-time workers were not directed at their higher level of absenteeism as such. Indeed, in his hypothetical case it is suggested there is not much difference in this respect, between full-timers and part-timers. The main difference lies in the extra difficulty and the complications entailed in coordinating production, given such a wide variety of workers' hours. And, since part-time workers in general were paid pro-rata for 40 hours, this was a disadvantage not outweighed by any obvious cost savings. Except, that is, in one department.

The only part-time shift which did not show a steady reduction over 1976-77 was the four-hourly (20 hour week) shift, which was used in plastic moulding (see Table 4). In this case, the four-shift system gave management definite cost gains. It allowed 16 hour utilisation of expensive machinery (from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m.) without the need to pay operating labour premium rates which two standard eight hour shifts would entail:

(Do the women get a shift premium?)

"Yes, they do a little - it's a set premium, not a percentage ... for 4 hours, the money's very good really ..."

(How much do the women get?)

"20 pence"

(Per hour, or per day?)

"Per week"

Pearl (Sub-Assembly, Convenor) (23)

The way part-time and full-time workers were distributed, and following the company's policy of reducing the former,

re-distributed within production, is again illustrated by the Stourbridge factory manager. The complications introduced into the organisation of the labour process by the utilisation of part-time workers is, once more, apparent; as is management's policy of differentiation and grouping to achieve "balance" and stability together with their reliance on movement of labour to achieve it.

(Are you actually going to cut down the number of part-time workers?)

"We're just not recruiting any, because we have sufficient for production anyway. (And) by gently and carefully manouvering the operators around ... We always talk in equivalent full-timers, so that providing you marry up your morning and afternoon operators, then you have the equivalent of one full-timer on that particular job. If you've got a hand-press, and you have a morning worker working the hand-press, an afternooner comes and works on the same hand-press. Now, if you lose one of them, then you put the half-timer somewhere else, and put the full-timer in her place - so you're not taking part-timers on, so you balance the factory out that way, so it makes you more efficient. This is why Stourbridge is more efficient than the other factories, because they pay a lot of attention to detail - well, we think we're that much more efficient than the other factories".

Barry White (Factory Manager) (24)

It would seem that the search for stability within the labour process was based on somewhat contradictory requirements.

It was the younger girls who constituted the main source of supply for 40 hour female workers on the labour market. But the older workers, most of whom worked part-time, applied themselves more consistently and were easier to "manage" - although their hours were not. The employment characteristics of both groups of women arose from their position in the family - which made the second a more "captive" and dependent workforce, but reduced the hours they

were available (i.e. the hours which their labour power was offered for, on the labour market).

The contradictions involved in the employer's demand for and use of labour which are indicated here point to the inadequacy of any simple assumptions concerning employers' requirements and a "functional fit" of women workers on the labour market's supply side. Moreover, contradictions arise between different aspects of the employer's priorities in relation to different control needs within the labour process.

How are these apparently contradictory changes to be explained? As we shall see BSR were rescued from the paradox of their contradictory requirements by wider circumstances which had an impact on the labour supply side.

In the early 1970s changes in the economic environment had begun to put greater pressure on the women to alter their pattern of employment to suit the firm rather than vice versa. There is no doubt that the rising cost of living and sheer necessity of two wage earners to keep a family, must have forced many women to accept employment under terms they might otherwise have refused. Such alternations in the pattern had already been observed locally, as inflation and recession combined to put a premium on regular employment and on keeping hold of a suitable job once it could be found. The firm's (temporary) crisis saw these changes consolidated at BSR:

"At one time when there was plenty of employment in the area, you would get them coming in probably, from August until just after Christmas. And then from March until after July - to put money away for holidays etc. But of course, a lot of that was stopped. (How was that?) By the people themselves. They got that - instead of doing a job when they felt

like it, they came into BSR, and came regularly and stopped that nonsense of coming and going". (When did that pattern stop?) "After the redundancies (1974-5). Strange how so much altered after that. The company didn't stop it..... I would blame the rising cost of living as much as anything else. Pearl (Sub-Assembly and Convenor) (25)

The problem of finding reasonable part-time work (there was a waiting list for all the part-time shifts at BSR) and anxiety not to lose the job they had, was frequently mentioned by the women at BSR. And, it would seem, part-timers in many areas were increasingly put under pressure to accept full-time hours in order to keep the jobs they were on. If they did not do so they were liable to be moved onto other work which they were not capable of doing. Despite the factory manager's description of "gently and carefully <sup>manoeuvring</sup> the operators around..." the judicious use of movement of labour could be used to ensure that unwanted workers did not have to be sacked - they were simply "manoeuvred" out of a job.

"They moved some people out of the department onto the main lines, and they were middle aged women, you know. And they put up a struggle but they still had to go in the end.... But they've left. The one's left that's done 15 years service. She was in that department 15 years, part-time afternoons. They put her on the main line, but she's left ... none of them was satisfied you know. Mind you, she was in her late 50's - say she was about 55. Well, I mean, it was a shame for that age, to put her on a job, you know, the lines." Carol (Moulding Shop) (26)

It is likely, therefore, that the firm were increasingly able to recruit the more "committed" "steadier" and "less mobile" workforce they required - that is the women with domestic commitments - for full-time hours when they needed them.



Having examined, in some detail, the company's recruitment policy, we go on to look at the kinds of problems faced by the women workers BSR recruited - whether for full-time or part-time employment.

PART 3:

THE DOUBLE BURDEN

"I'm always tired ... its every-day things, pressure. Things do get on top of you, you know. I think ... you go to work and then you've got your washing, ironing, shopping - everyday pressures you know. I mean anybody's got those anyway, haven't they? (well, women?) Yes! now, oh well-women! And this is where they get a lot of absentees, which can't be helped anyway can it? I mean, they've got to expect it, if it's a woman's factory".  
Tracy (Final Assembly) (27)

There is at least one fundamental difference distinguishing the position of women and men as "free" wage labourers on the labour market and in employment. This basic distinction arises from their position within family and household relationships. The complex sphere of domestic relations, with its characteristic sexual division of labour, is one which significantly 'frees' male workers' disposition of their labour power in terms of the employment relationship at the same time as it binds them as "breadwinners" more closely to it. But the commitments and substantial responsibilities from which they are freed are those requiring their physical presence (rather than economic support), and these remain within the household (to the extent they are not socialised) and rest on women. Two important consequences arise from this. One is, of course, the notorious dual role peculiar to women workers. Another is the characteristic organisation of the employment relation itself (e.g. the working day). This is based on the availability of "free" male wage labour (i.e. those free of competing commitments, as well as competing sources of support), and, therefore, the material exclusion of non-wage relations. Where male workers maintain or follow this pattern, these two circumstances combine to constitute the dual role for women as a

double burden.

In this part of the chapter some of the problems which arise from married women's position as wage workers with domestic commitments are examined. These commitments are presented as having two distinct aspects: the women are shown to be not only housekeepers, but also "carers" responsible for the well-being of others. Some general questions concerning the organisation of waged work in relation to domestic responsibilities, are then raised in terms of the position of married women in the labour market. This is viewed firstly by illustrating the women's distinctive patterns of employment from which some general aspects of their labour market requirements can be identified; with a closer look at more specific problem areas, such as the way pay levels (also) constrain/determine working hours.

The discussion which follows differs in two respects from the examination of the employer's demand for female labour. In the first place it is conducted at a more general level, and although we look at the problems and job histories of individual women, these can also be taken to both exemplify and illustrate what kind of impact the double burden has on wage-working women's lives more generally. In the second place, whereas it was necessary to consider aspects of the consumption of female labour power (i.e. its utilisation in the labour process) in the analysis of the employer's recruitment policy - and clearly this has implications for the way the <sup>women</sup> were able to combine both waged and domestic work - we leave consideration of their actual experience on the shopfloor, until the following chapters.

Here, therefore, we are following up our previous discussion where we have noted the way female labour was crucial to the employer because of its characteristic flexibility in essential respects: its recruitment, its utilisation and its dispensability. This flexibility was the only basis by which market instabilities could be mediated in the labour process and stability - fundamental here - maintained. We find that in every respect, although women workers apparently "supply" this flexibility - almost, it seems, as a natural feature of their labour power and the conditions under which it is offered - there is, in fact, no easy fit between the employer's requirements and their own. Here, we are looking at the aspect of recruitment. Later, we go on to examine the impact of "flexible utilisation" and "dispensability". In every respect, "flexibility" from the point of view of the workers is problematic. This stability for the employer, has to be seen as a cost which is borne by this workforce, rather than an agreeable match of demand and supply-side requirements.

The only way these costs can be identified however, is by examining precisely, the nature and basis of these requirements. To the extent that the needs and priorities imposed by the capitalist mode of production are contradictory to human needs, we might expect the nature of the flexibility required by women on the one hand (who largely cater for these human needs) and the capitalist employers on the other, not only to differ but to be fundamentally opposed.

Two points can be made at the outset. First, women cannot be written off as the unfortunate victims of their circumstances, trapped forever within a vicious circle the double burden forms. A number of contradictions break this circle, and women's own struggles

to do so have been, and are, significant, both historically and politically. The task itself is enormous, however, which leads to the second point. Although the impact of the double burden is a question seemingly specific to the situation of women workers, the implications go far beyond this and relate to the division of labour and organisation of work in society as a whole.

The nature of women's domestic commitments and problems regarding the organisation of waged work.

Edna worked full-time (8 a.m. - 4.45 p.m.) on the main (final assembly) line test section. She was 26 years old and her son was 6. She lived three miles from the factory. Her husband was employed at another firm as an electrician.

(How does your job affect your life outside work?)

"Well, it affects it in a lot of ways really. Because by the time I get home and I've done the tea, and I tidy up, you know, you have a quick clean round - get the little boy ready for bed, and tell him a story and we have a chat: it's round about twenty five past eight.

And then I go under the shower, so by the time I'm clean and everything else, it's about a quarter to nine ... well, it's too late to do anything - so .. you just haven't got time to do anything. And then on a weekend, you're sort of catching up on your washing and your ironing and on your general house things. The only treat I could say I really have is like say on a Saturday evening. And I think if Mike didn't take me out some Saturday nights, I'd still find something to do then !

Well, some days you get that tired you feel quite low, you know. I get not so much depressed - as I feel ill, you know, from tiredness. I sit down and I think I could actually be sick if I really thought about how tired I was. That's how it can get.

(Have you ever been to the doctor about it?)

"No, they sort of, know the problem don't they really? I mean, I'm bound to get over-tired. When you've got a lot to keep up with. I mean, he can't really do much for me - only tell me to pack up work. And if I pack up work, where's the money coming from? So, I've sorted my own problem out"

Edna (Final Assembly) (28)

The women who did two jobs - one paid at the factory, the other, unpaid housework, at home - worked extremely long hours and suffered a general, permanent fatigue. Barbara (21) for example, came on a coach laid on to bring workers from Bromsgrove. She lived 20 miles from the factory. She left the house at 7 a.m. and returned at 6 p.m., an initial working day of 11 hours. She had no children, but her daily pattern - rising at 6 a.m. and not resting until 9 p.m. was common among the married women whose ranks she had recently joined. Women with housework to do put in a regular 15 hour day.

"Yes, it does get on top of you.

Well, it's lack of time. I'm working 40 hours a week, I go home cook food you know, tidy around, its half past eight - nine o'clock before I sit down. And then you've got all your washing and your housework again on the week-end. I don't really have a rest. I don't have a week-end really.

I'm very tired! You know, by the time I get home, I don't know, I need the money so I've got to go.

(Has it affected your social life?)

Yes, it has actually. I've been that tired I haven't wanted to go out when I've gone home.

(Has that always been the case, since you've worked here?)

No. More or less since I got married like. Going home and then I've got the house and food to cook and that.

(So you were alright before, when your mum was....?)

Yes, it was there when I got home you know, and I'd only got to get ready to go out then."

Barbara (Final Assembly line) (29).

Apart from the long hours and fatigue attached to the constant round of physical work, a crucial aspect of women's position generally, is their responsibility for the care and well-being of others and the binding nature of the commitment which is therefore involved.

The strength of this is especially due to the kind of physical dependence that others - particularly children and the infirm - have on them. This kind of responsibility and commitment which rests on women goes beyond house upkeep and personal servicing by wife for husband, although it is, of course, also integral to family relationships as a whole.

"One on leads section again, (on mornings). She worked 'cos her husband's not on much money. She's got an elderly mother-in-law, nearly 80, who is crippled. The girl is frightened to leave her on her own. She often has had to spend all day with her.

She's asked me once or twice. She says, 'Pip, what on earth can I do? We've tried to get my mother away because she isn't safe to leave on her own, and I have to come out to work', she says, 'and I just can't cope'. Eventually, she got her mother-in-law into a home - after a hard struggle".  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (30)

"A friend of mine, her father's ill - he's 80. But the firm have been very reasonable with her; she's had a day off a week, since March - but she's had to cover herself with a doctor's note, kind of thing. Not each time, but the doctor wrote a note stating that she was needed at home, at her father's home, one day a week - because they ... they're sisters - they take it in turns looking after the old man."

(Is this arrangement O.K?) "She says so. She goes down a couple of times, during the week at night you know. I mean, that's a hell of a full time job! And it's a full-time job she's got here and she's got a family at home - these are the problems! These are the problems ... you've got women that have got daughters with marital problems, you know - they suddenly descend with the kids - there's lots ... lots of problems."  
Sally (Sub-Assembly) (31)

The organisation of employment patterned by the requirements of commodity production, productivity and profitability in opposition to human needs, presents for women workers especially a source of immense stress. To the extent that employment can be organised

to fit in with domestic responsibilities, the pressure derived from these competing commitments may be somewhat relieved - even if the workload itself is not. But, as the examples quoted above, and indeed, the whole of this section is intended to show, such organisation on the employers' part, has to go beyond simply presenting part-time jobs at a variety of "convenient" hours in order to attract the labour required. What this means in concrete terms is discussed in more detail below, when the question of flexibility in the organisation of production at BSR is raised in the context of the women's problems.

First, however, the way in which some women's employment patterns were shaped by their changing domestic circumstances is briefly described in order to indicate the general nature of women's requirements in the labour market, and it is suggested that these are not totally fulfilled by the provision of part-time work alone, nor is this provision unproblematic. These general problems which women face in the labour market are the background against which those specific to the workplace must always be considered.

Even in terms of the employment profiles of just sixteen women (those who gave in-depth interviews) the discontinuous and complex work patterns associated with marriage and especially child-raising, are immediately obvious. All of these women had gone into full-time employment from school. Of the fifteen who were married, seven had left their jobs at this point, the other six leaving on the birth of their first child. (Although two of the women had also had to leave work in a previous period, to look after members of their parental family).<sup>(32)</sup> Of the thirteen women with children, ten had then taken up some form of part-time or casual (specifically short-term) jobs which fitted in with child-care arrangements. The other



three, having once left full-time paid work, stayed out of employment altogether until resuming, full-time, at a later date. While the single woman and the two who were married but without children, had remained in full-time employment without a break.

Within this small sample alone, a wide range of labour contracts can be identified in the different patterns which incorporate, in varying combinations: continuous or discontinuous full time, part-time, casual and short-term employment. For any one woman in the workforce the pattern might cover almost the whole range: full-time work, a break from employment altogether, resumption with part-time and or temporary jobs, followed by a return to full-time paid work - their employment requirements altering over time, according to domestic circumstances and needs.

On the other hand, for any one occupation, the pattern of employment available is unlikely to match this range. Pursuit of many "careers" for example, seems to require continuous employment throughout a working life (for no totally irresolvable reason). And much employment is simply not to be had on a "part-time" basis at all. Clearly, the availability of employment which is suitable for men or women to combine with domestic responsibilities is problematic. And the general question which is raised here, about the organisation of waged work and family life, goes beyond any one individual firm where special arrangements might be made.

We return to BSR however. A company which seemed to offer the relatively rare opportunity for women to take up, in the context of one company, employment to suit their domestic circumstances.

They could pursue a continuous or discontinuous pattern - returning after periodic breaks in their employment, and they could be employed on any one of a range of part-time shifts - for a variety of hours. Yet even here, the availability of work on such terms was problematic because it was subject to criteria other than the women's needs.

Thus when the firm required extra workers in 1973-4 they were recruited from Telford for the attractive 9.30 a.m. - 3.30 p.m. shift and brought in by coach - only to be made redundant in early 1975. Thereafter, the labour market had eased considerably and the offer had changed - it was full-time work or nothing.

"They come from such a distance, they used to be 9.30 workers but now they've been put on full-time. They have to start out extremely early - it's 24 miles to Telford!

There's no work around Telford - and those women have got to live, just the same as us. They started to come - they put a coach on for them when we needed the work so much - until the redundancies".  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (33)

Not only is the availability of employment for hours enabling men or women to combine domestic responsibilities a general problem, but the pay also. The way in which wage-rates relate to the cost of living, translates into how many hours workers need to labour, and this also constrains the kinds of choices that people can make.

"If I could work shorter hours - I would have done shorter hours, but at the time I came for the job, we were buying our own house and I needed the money, so ... They'd only got full-time at the time I came down, so I took it. We sort of managed, so ...

(But you'd really rather do part-time?) Part time, yes. (Which hours would suit you best?) I think 8 o'clock till half past 12, because my sister takes my little boy to school - that's not so bad, but I would like to be there when he came home. You know, I would like to see more of my little boy, but ... "  
Edna (Final Assembly) (34)

The provision of employment at convenient hours, is certainly an important requirement as far as women with domestic responsibilities are concerned. But their needs cannot be assumed to stop here. Part-time work does not provide a living wage. Madge (35) was divorced and had two children aged twelve and fifteen at home. She worked from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. earning £23 gross per week. And her biggest problem was lack of money:

"It costs as much for us to live as a family without a big wage-earner ... My friends can take their money home as pin-money. Mine has to go to keep a house and myself. My maintenance doesn't keep the children in any case. There's just me as a wage-earner and I've got exactly the same lighting and heating bills. In fact I have to economise to the point that we can only have the bath on twice per week!

I can't really afford the time to work full-time. If I go full-time something else has got to go, something that I can't fit in ... But I gave an awful lot of pleasures up in the first place. I can't go out and buy clothes. I couldn't tell you when I last went in a shop - I can't remember ever going in a shop and trying a dress on and buying it ! It doesn't bother me, because I consider myself as well dressed. But these things make a difference; it makes the difference between coming to work and working happy".

Madge (Moulding Shop) (35)

Nor does the provision of shorter hours alone, resolve the problems such as child-care.

"One girl I know left two months ago because she couldn't get anybody to look after the child on the afternoon shift - she worked on the afternoon shift, 1.15 - 4.45 p.m. She was stuck, her sister wouldn't look after him and she was stuck with him". Carol (Moulding Shop) (36)

### Conclusions

These are just a few of the problems facing women in the labour market who seek to combine waged and domestic work and these structure general demands concerning the terms on which employment is provided. They arise because in significant ways, employment terms and relationships are organised on the assumption that workers will not combine commitments to labour in both spheres. The free waged workers offering their labour in the market <sup>are</sup> "free" of those commitments or rather, in theory, are presumed to be. Yet the wage form, patterned as it may be, by notions of "bread winners" wages and its complement - "pin-money" contains no guarantees of family or individual maintenance within its structures; rather the opposite. Nor has it, in any historical period, proved adequate in this respect. (37)

On the other hand, as we have seen, the women workers were recruited on the basis of characteristically "unfree" aspects of their labour - such as their alternative means of financial support, and their pattern of availability determined by competing commitments.

Married women workers have long taken their place in the "active" labour force - to keep themselves, to keep their families, to keep their independence. What problems do they find within employment relationships at workplace level? If they are specifically engaged as married women with domestic commitments, are the difficulties experienced in the labour market, which are associated with this "special status" left behind at the factory gate - particularly one that is especially designed so as to admit them?

In this section, some assessment has already been made of the impact of the double burden. This must be viewed, not only in personal terms - the toll of fatigue and stress, but also more broadly. The problems which arise are largely specific to women and central to their experience of the employment relationship. Their needs inform both their immediate demands and the direction of future change; but their ability and willingness to make such changes is also structured by their position.

In the following chapters we go on to examine how production was organised at BSR and how the labour of the women workers specifically was utilized, identifying in the second part of each, the particular needs and problems which resulted for the women workers.

THE FIRM AND ITS WORKFORCE

Footnotes

- (1) The plastic moulding shop at Stourbridge, with nearly 200 machines, was claimed to be the largest in Europe.
- (2) In this country, for example, they supplied Fidelity, which had 80% of the British market. By 1976 they had pushed out Garrard and bought up Glenburn (a competitor) in order to close it. Manufacturers abroad went out of production altogether in this market sphere: for example, RCA and General Electric. Others bought-in cheaper BSR components to use in their own products: for example Matsushita (Japan) and Telefunken in West Germany. A potential competitor, MASA, set up in Mexico with State funding failed to establish a foothold in the market where the major customers demanded high volumes of a reliable product on the basis of flexible but prompt delivery.
- (3) Interview 19.1.1977
- (4) The name was changed from Birmingham Sound Reproduction in 1962.
- (5) The company had once ventured into tape-decks but withdrew when these seemed slow to take-off. Subsequently the factory in Northern Ireland was closed in 1967 (but not before some trouble with the government over their milking development grants and employment subsidies)
- (6) See Financial Times 28.6.1980 for the fate of Garrard (sold as a 'shell' to Brazilian company Gradiente).
- (7) Discussion, February 1976.
- (8) Some part-time male workers were also taken on, particularly for security jobs, plus a few for labouring on the women's shifts. But while it is apparent that nearly a half of the 1264 men employed in October 1977 in the 3 West Midlands factories worked under 40 hours - the vast majority of these (504 out of 573) were on a 37½ hour week (see table 2) On the other hand, of the 6,463 hourly paid women employed, the two thirds (4191) who were part-time, all worked less than 30 hours per week (see table 2).
- (9) So those working 'mornings' did a 22½ hour week and those on afternoons 17½ hours. Some operations were not symmetrically paired, so more worked on the 'morning' shifts than the 'afternoons'.
- (10) They were mainly employed to operate the plastic moulding machines and they constituted the largest number on any one shift system. Two thirds(820 out of 1307) of these workers were employed at the Stourbridge factory. Some factories ran, on occasion a 'twilight shift' from 5.30 - 9.45 p.m. (21½ hours per week). This was a regular feature at Waterfall Lane, where it constituted the largest single shift in October 1977, employing over 200 women.
- (11) As Paul Thompson (1983) put it: "When Mexicans who can no longer live off the land come to the border region, they meet

US companies in search of cheap labour for their assembly plants. Yet they are not willing to accept all those who sell themselves at a low cost. One advertisement specified: 'we need female workers; older than 17, younger than 30; single and without children, maximum education secondary school; minimum education primary school; available for all shifts'(quoted in Hilsum 1982). There is something clearly special about the characteristics associated with female wage labour" pp. 181-182 Emphasis in original. He concluded that there is a "necessity to focus on why employers bring women into the labour force and how they are used to carry out particular tasks in the labour process" p. 184. Emphasis in original. And see Elson and Pearson (1981) for a useful discussion.

(12) See Herzog (1980)

(13) In Chesterman's study quoted above, a job experience scheme gave a mixed intake of school leavers the opportunity to learn wiring (a job solely done by women workers, mostly Indian, in the employing company). The boys were found to learn the job quicker than the girls.

Wild & Hill (1970) found job turnover particularly high in the electronics firms they studied. An area where women's dexterity and docility are supposed to be significant.

(14) Ref MB 12/S2: 85-95

(15) Ref BW 21/S1: 423-944

(16) Ref BW 4/S1: 81-100

(17) Ref JF Discussion 28.6.1978

(18) Ref PB 32/S5: 374-405

(19) Ref BW 5/S1 : 121-127

(20) Ref BW 21/S1: 898-923

(21) As Chesterman (1978) noted of the workforce at G.E.C.: "It would seem probable that the female dominance of wiring jobs has less to do with their dexterity, than with the limited job opportunities for women in Coventry manufacturing, and their consequent acceptance of poor pay and monotonous work". p.151.

(22) Ref BW 21/S1: 944-977

(23) Ref PB 11/S2: 613-660

(24) Ref BW 22-23/S1 977-1018. The discussion continued as follows (Are you changing part-time jobs for full-time?) "We marry them up you see. So if a morning operator leaves, then we might find we have an afternoon to marry up, and you change around - you put her on a new job, and then a full-timer goes in that position, so you gradually build up a line with full-timers on, without any aggravation at all. (Will there be fewer part-time jobs?) There's no part-time jobs as such. The only part-time

jobs we've got are the moulding machines, and they are 4 hour shifts. You've got 3 or 4 different types of shifts. You have the full-timer, which works from 8 a.m. till 4.45 p.m. Then you have 2 part timers, which one works in the morning and one works in the afternoon, now that constitutes what we call an equivalent full-timer. So that's giving you 3 shifts. Then you have a 9.30 shift, which is an animal all by itself - which starts at 9.30 a.m. and finishes at 3.30 p.m. - now, there's 2 main assembly lines like that, and a section upstairs like that. So, gradually, over a period of time they've all been moved around, people one at a time, moved around until we've got those in those particular areas - so that's 4 shifts you've got. Then you've got the evening shifts, or what we call 'shift females', which works from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., 10 a.m. till 2 p.m., 2 p.m. till 6 p.m., and 6 p.m. till 10 again. So that gives you another 4 shifts - 8 altogether. Now, those are the only female shifts, all the rest are what we call the equivalent full-timers - in that case, 2 part-timers make up a full-timer. So that means, if you've got a morning worker leave, you look round to see if you can find an afternoon space, or a morning vacancy, and marry it up with another afternoon, so you then finish up with an equivalent full-timer".

(25) Ref PB 33/S5: 561-589

(26) Ref CB 17-18/S2: 105-135

(27) Ref TS 8/S1: 777-825

(28) Ref EW 10/S1: 606-643 and EW 23/S3: 397-420

(29) Ref BB 8-9/S1: 470-479 and BB 4/S1: 188-199

(30) Ref PW 26/S3: 203-219

(31) Ref SB 17-18/S2: 440-485

(32) For example Edna when she was still single:

"I left in 1968, because my mother was ill, she was very ill - she was going through a lot of bad depression and she couldn't do anything, you know and she ... Like I said, I came from a big family - there was still 4 of us lived at home, I had 5 brothers so ... And, of course I left my job to do the housework every day and look after my mother - when she got better I came back. I think I left about 5 months.

Edna (Final Assembly).  
Ref EW4/S1 : 189-199

(33) Ref PW 37/S4: 1-20

(34) Ref EW 1/S1: 47-58

(35) Ref MB 2/S1: 167-197

(36) Ref CB 15/S1: 949-960

(37) See Barrett & McIntosh (1982)



CHAPTER 4 PRODUCING THE BSR WAY

"We think that if produced in the BSR way - I mean by that, cut down waste and increase efficiency, we can come to the market-place confident we can make that product and also that we should be able to sell it."  
J.Ferguson (Chairman). (1)

As we have seen, the company had historically been extremely dependent on one product - the auto-changer - and on one market, the USA "a changer-market traditionally." (John Ferguson). "Ferguson believes there is such a big market in the United States, that is where the company should sell. And if the product is good enough, they can sell there". (Union Official). As it happened, the market did collapse, but even then the product itself was still finding supporters.

"The company's founder, Dr Daniel MacDonald introduced a record changer mechanism in 1968 whose basic design remains good".  
(Financial Times 5.11.79).

"What BSR is suffering from, then, in main-line business is not, like Garrard, poor products ... For BSR is not Garrard. Hi fi buffs are deeply contemptuous of Garrard equipment. They do not admire BSR, but then they are not really meant to, for that is not the end of the market that BSR is in. The stuff it does make is very cheap". (Guardian 11.9.80).

The firm operated a high volume, low margin production policy in a highly competitive market, which was also unstable in relation to economic fluctuations and consumer demand patterns. Dealing with powerful customers, the trans-national retailers in a position to exploit strong competition between producers and controlling bulk distribution outlets, market dominance offered little protection from these fluctuations for the manufacturers, in terms of either output or pricing flexibility. These points are illustrated by Ferguson's comments on the Chicago trade fair, where a Japanese

competitor was discovered under-cutting one of BSR's lines.

"At the show we said that if customers could give a firm commitment to 100,000 manuals, we would guarantee a lower price. We had to drop the M100 \$2.60 - we are making a loss at that - to prevent them getting into the market. If they get in with these, they'll then start making changers. They hold customers to taking numbers at certain dates - we leave customers flexible. Therefore, this is a potentially dangerous situation". J.Ferguson. (2)

It is clear that profitable production in this environment must demand an extremely high measure of control over costs and output. Production policy and the main methods used by BSR's management to this end, are discussed below. Thus in Part 1 management structure and the system of centralised control is briefly outlined. It is followed by an overview of the production policy and main methods used to maintain productivity and required output levels. This leads to a discussion of the way production was organised by management, looking at the division of labour in the labour process and within this, the way the labour force was distributed, maintaining an overall view of the implications for managerial control.

In Part 2, we go on to see what implications "producing the BSR way" had for the women workers. Some of the problems which management's production methods raised - for the female labour force in particular - are identified, along with the kind of needs to which they gave rise.

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PART 1: MANAGEMENT'S PRODUCTION POLICY

Management Structure and centralised control

Management's problem was to maintain output at levels necessary to meet customers' demands and keep a very tight control over production costs in order to remain competitive and make a profit. The extent to which they succeeded can be judged from the company's results over 20 years, and their reputation for consistent efficiency and high productivity which had long echoed around stock market circles . (3) BSR's management ran what was known as "a very tight ship".

THE TIGHT SHIP

BSR was a business organisation where money was very tightly controlled indeed, and decision-making highly centralised. The company's chairman John Ferguson personally maintained almost total control, "he runs it like a one-man band". (4) The Board of Directors <sup>was</sup> very small - seven members including himself. The policy of centralised control was reflected in the overall business strategy which was to have, as far as possible, no borrowing at all, the company being financed, in the main, by retained earnings. There was also a conscious attempt to keep share prices down to prevent take-overs: the policy being to have a greater number of shares - well spread around. To this end, for example, at the peak of the 1972-4 boom £6 shares were split into £3. Ferguson's and the directors' holdings in the company were small.

"He doesn't need it for control, only he can run the company. The shareholders don't know what's happening. But he's been successful, therefore it doesn't matter". Paul (Union official). (5)

The policy of centralised control was also reflected in the company's structure, which was extremely self-contained. Vertical integration, in order to safeguard themselves in relation to suppliers, saw the addition of numerous small firms to the group;<sup>(6)</sup> and on the distribution side, the company operated through wholly owned subsidiaries in each main sales area of the world.

The management structure itself became rapidly concentrated above department level, with a Works Manager and an assistant who was also the Chief Production Engineer. There were four lower levels of management (although not all four were to be found in each area of operation). They were: department head (superintendent); foreman; assistant foreman/senior chargehand/senior supervisor; chargehand/junior supervisor. The first two categories were on staff conditions and were weekly or monthly paid; the last two categories were hourly paid.

Reflecting top-level direct control, higher managerial positions reporting directly to the board of executives carried massive responsibilities, yet little autonomy or scope for any decision-making which might have policy implications.<sup>(7)</sup> The only factory manager with any degree of independent authority was John Smith at Stourbridge who held a director's post.

Women were conspicuous by their absence from this hierarchy, which was entirely male above the level of supervisor, apart from a handful of forewomen who had recently been made up on the main assembly lines.<sup>(8)</sup> In general, managers were recruited from the skilled grades, men with BSR shop-floor experience (such as setter-chargehands) being preferred. Few were brought into management from "outside", the company favouring internal promotions and transfers

within the group. These men had been trained "to produce the BSR way", and understood what their positions entailed. They were expected to be "on the floor" organising production, not sitting at an office desk. To this end they, along with all except purely administrative staff, worked from glass-walled offices on the factory floor, which they rarely inhabited. (9)

Priority of production, financial stringency and direct, centralised control, were also reflected in the remarkably minimal staff and administrative side. This feature had been particularly noted (with some dismay) by the CIR in their investigation at East Kilbride in 1970, in respect of the personnel functions. (10)

A department comprising two people in a factory employing over 2,000 was fully occupied with recruitment and record-keeping alone a pattern which was not (despite CIR advice) elaborated in later years.

Administrative leanness was also noted by the consultants Inbucon, called in to set up a productivity scheme in 1977. Surprised by the lack of data generally considered essential for efficient managers, the consultants' task, on this occasion, apparently required rather more imagination in constructing the figures, than usual:

"One of the reasons for the strength of BSR's competitive position is the maintenance of strict controls over the level of clerical and administrative staff and associated administrative routines.

In some areas, however, there appeared to be a lack of data which is vital to the effective operation of the business. It was impossible, for instance, to obtain comprehensive information on lateness and absenteeism both of which are considered to be major problems, and the lack of a reliable measure of actual hours worked made it difficult to assess changes in the level of labour productivity. (11)

Finally, management-union relations were also clearly structured by the company's pattern of centralised, personal control. (12)

Bargaining was consciously confined to one union, the GMWU; (although as it turned out, the AUEW had sole negotiating rights for the Scottish plants at East Kilbride.) In the West Midlands, the 100% membership agreement had produced one of the largest single branches in the country and a single-company group which constituted some 10% of the GMWU's membership in the Birmingham Region. (100,000)

Conscious of the significance of his company's presence, the Chairman was assured of prompt attention from the top-level of the regional hierarchy. Ferguson kept bargaining close to himself, negotiating and making decisions on all matters of consequence with the full-time official at the final stage of bargaining procedure. The penultimate stage of negotiation, wherein the full-time official met top-management, was conducted with the industrial relations director, Tony Stuart, who operated above the level of individual factory managers. (He covered East Kilbride as well). This penultimate stage comprised, in reality, the first significant stage of negotiation on all bar the purely "domestic" issues, since at the factory level, management's scope for decision-making was limited, with all decisions and bargaining being monitored by John Ferguson. He worked in liaison with Tony Stuart, who was closely briefed for negotiations. Ferguson kept in touch with the issues and maintained contact with the officials, regularly providing them with reports on the company's position. (13)

The management structure described above reflects the policy of centralised control which allowed little scope for autonomy or the use of discretion anywhere except at the top. The organisation

of production itself reflected this principle, by removing as far as possible, scope for the use of discretion on the part of the workers. Factory managers were vested with a great deal of control over the production process itself. But in relation to the workforce, they were few in number. How then were they able to operate a labour process which relied on the application of direct control so effectively?

(Was there a lot of pressure on management?)

"Tremendous amount of pressure. From the time we come in, before we officially start work, and it goes on after we go - I mean I'm talking about the normal finishing time ... We are under pressure all the time. The units drive us. I mean this is the problem, you've got the units coming off the end of the line and you've got to be at all those lines at the same time - Now there's a tremendous amount of control from the managers themselves. Each area is divided up under various managers." (Is there too much pressure on management?) " You get used to it. It gets occasionally, a bit hectic, when everything goes wrong at once - but then you ride over the top of it and you go down the other side ..."  
Barry White (Factory Manager). (14)

We go on to look at BSR's production policy and methods. The main elements of these are given, in brief outline, in the next section. They are taken up for discussion in more detail later on, where they form the themes of the subsequent chapters.



Production policy and methods: "the units drive us"

"We operate in a high volume market, with a small profit on each component, all depends on sheer quantity of output. Success or failure hangs by a slim thread, because if units are produced with no profit, however many are turned out it will make no difference. Our biggest markets are the United States and Japan. Competition is very tough".  
Tony Stuart (Industrial Relations Director). (15)

The two main production control needs facing BSR's management centred on unit costs and output. Unit costs were lowest when maximum output was achieved from the labour and capital employed. But because demand was so unstable, in a short period, the maximum output levels required could fluctuate markedly. Given a narrow profit margin which could be quickly eroded whenever output was reduced in relation to the amount of labour and capital being utilised, the company's policy was to maximise output at all times; to keep the amount of fixed capital to a minimum and to employ a largely female labour force. The last two items are frequently linked, in the sense that employers are seen to make a rational choice between the low purchase price of the latter in relation to the former. We would argue, however, that management's considerations rested far more on the different nature of their variability in terms of utilisation or consumption within the labour process.

Given the firm's environmental constraints, its viability depended on maintaining a maximum level of output for all levels of "input" and in maintaining the continuity of this maximum output-rate throughout each working day and year. Output requirements fluctuated however, and falling levels immediately threatened profitability. One answer was to reduce the level of output by

reducing the workforce, rather than the rate: i.e. to allow the "inputs" to vary the output level, while preserving the same output rate. As noted above, high turnover on the part of women workers offered management the potential of greater "downwards" flexibility in terms of labour input. But this feature could not be reliable if simply left to circumstance or under the workers' own control. <sup>(16)</sup> And as we shall show in later sections management did not simply sit back to reap the advantages of "natural wastage". The most important characteristic of the women workers for management was perhaps not so much this feature as their easier dispensibility. High or higher turnover could be, and was, engineered by management in various ways which are examined more fully in the chapters which follow. High turnover was also a "by-product" of a number of characteristic features of management's production policy with regard to the women workers. It is important to realise that managerial strategy with regard to the utilisation of the female labour force had many distinctive aspects. Some features scarcely applied to male workers at all, or else applied to very few of them. These differences are described more fully in the later chapters, which take up again the methods outlined below.

The most striking thing about this labour process was the pace of work. This was remarkable not only because it was so fast, but because it was also sustained. "We are under pressure all the time - the units 'drive us'" was the comment of one manager. Of course management aimed to drive the workers - how?

In the first place management demanded high levels of output and penalised workers if they failed to reach the required count. (This is discussed more fully in the chapters on discipline and the payment system). On top of this (we have already noted the

constraints on management which would demand it) they instituted a continuous process of speed-up and intensification of work, and this was attempted in two main ways. One involved altering the jobs themselves: by directly increasing the counts, speeding up machinery or increasing the number of tasks allotted to the job. The other involved consistently under-staffing the labour process and redistributing the work, so that extra tasks were allocated to the operators present - a process known as "doubling up". (See pp 168-170).

The use of all of these methods was under-pinned by the implementation of movement of labour. (Chapter 5 ). Labour mobility was management's most clearly explicated and most closely protected principle, which no precedent or circumstance (such as unionisation) was to be allowed to qualify. All women workers on the shop floor were recruited as "operatives". Management retained the right to put them onto any job at any time: "no job is yours". It was argued that this flexibility was essential because of the women's high levels of absenteeism. In a sense it was, but the "absence" of workers on the shop floor, could be seen as much the consequence of management's "recruitment" policy - understaffing, as the workers taking time off. Indeed the two were not unrelated.

Another feature which underpinned the high pace of work was the payment system. (Chapter 7 ). A complex piecework bonus scheme, with a low incentive element, was operated on the shop floor in combination with fixed performance and 'no-value' jobs in some areas. An important aspect of the bonus system especially was the obscure relationship pertaining between earnings and effort, which

permitted manipulation by management. Further features included the significant areas of non-or-discretionary payment - also strongly protected by management. These allowed various production costs otherwise accruing to the employer, to be passed on and thus borne by, the workforce instead. In particular the system whereby rejects were not "counted" should be mentioned as this facilitated another form of work intensification whereby, when lower output was required, management could introduce bad parts into assembly, in order to effect a quantitative reduction in both the end product and the wages bill, without allowing the pace of work to slacken, i.e. pay less wages for, effectively, the same amount of work.

Finally, discipline must be noted as a crucial feature of management's production policy. High levels of intimidation were sustained on the shop floor generally, by management taking disciplinary action on a regular basis. (Chapter 6 ). Disciplinary action was also used specifically to enforce each of the methods for instituting speed-up and intensification of labour described above.

The principles and methods outlined here, aimed at controlling the workforce in order to maintain or increase (high) levels of productivity, informed management's practice on the shop floor. It should not be assumed, therefore, that they were consistently or entirely successful. The degree to which they might be at any one point in time would obviously vary, not least with the workers' responses; and in the chapters which follow these questions are more fully examined. But it is important to note the basis on which these managerial strategies were applied, because the

effectiveness of both their application (by management) and the workers' responses was governed by the underlying organisation of the labour process. This structured the way workers related to each other individually and collectively. It also structured the kind and degree of control they could exercise over their jobs: again, these two things are related.

It is a commonplace that the division of labour has implications for managerial control. In the following sections, we go on to look at the way production was organised, paying particular attention to the ways in which the workforce was structured. This points forward to a later discussion of workers' own job controls and organisation on the shop floor. Since, however, it is management that first forms workers' collective organisation, we look first at the way this was shaped in relation to their own control needs, through the division of labour and the organisation of the labour process.

#### The sexual division of labour and social relations in production

In Chapter 2 we discussed the company's recruitment policy and examined the preference for women workers. Men were, of course, employed as well and as is commonly found, the distribution of male and female workers in the labour process formed a distinctive pattern (see Table 5). It is to an examination of this that we now turn.

The company's labour force was divided along sex lines and segregated in terms of at least three important dimensions: actual job and type of task; operating area; and authority relations. These aspects can be illustrated with reference to one of the

TABLE 5

DISTRIBUTION MALE/FEMALE WORKERS: STOURBRIDGE  
FACTORY 1978. (Approximate figures)

		EMPLOYEES (approx figures)				
		Male	Female	Total	%M	%F
D	Basic processes -	100	1100	1200	9	89
I	Moulding	-	770	770	-	100
R	Machine shop	20	50	70	40	60
E	Press shop	-	80	80	-	100
C	Paint,plating & stripping	40	200	240	20	80
T	EPS plant	40	-	40	100	-
	Assembly:	-	2050	2050	-	100
	Sub assemblies	-	1200	1200	-	100
	Main lines	-	850	850	-	100
	TOTAL: DIRECT PRODUCTION	100	3150	3250	3	97
I	Maintenance	30	-	30	100	-
N	Toolroom	30	-	30	100	-
D	Carpenters/Building maintenance & garage	30	-	30	100	-
I	Stores/warehouse	30	-	30	100	-
R	Quality control/Insp.	10	10	20	50	50
E	Setters	10		10	100	-
	Service & general labouring	130	-	130	100	-
C	Canteen/cleaners	-	20	20	-	100
T	TOTAL: INDIRECT	270	30	300	90	10
	First-line supervision	50	120	170	29	71
	TOTAL: DIRECT & INDIRECT + SUPERVISION	420	3300	3720	11	89

Source: Research Notes.

factories, Stourbridge, where the factory manager also provided some revealing comments on each of them. (17)

The factory employed some 3,000 women and 400 men. Apart from a few men operating large plant in the polystyrene or plating shops or engaged on metal machining, no other male workers were engaged in direct production - either on basic processes or assembly. (18)

"We very seldom employ men on women's work, or women on ... Oh, I'd better rephrase that. We very seldom employ men on what is traditionally, women's work, and we very seldom employ women on, what is traditionally, men's work. (Why is that?) Because its not similar jobs. I mean, a man invariably, does heavy work - therefore, naturally a woman is not going to go onto a heavy ... is not ... not capable of doing a heavy job ... er, that's the only reason. (What about the other way round?). Er, you don't use men on women's work, because you see obviously - they haven't got the nimbleness of fingers. They haven't got a ... er, not degrading women when I say this - they haven't got the ability to have a monotonous job all day long. And ... it just doesn't work. I mean ... "

(Have you ever employed men as production workers?)

"Oh, yes. On the night shift we employ all men you see. We don't run a night shift - night shift runs from 10 p.m. till 6 in the morning. The rest of the shifts are evening shifts. But we used to employ men on nights, because you weren't at that time allowed to run women on nights. Oh, we used to employ 200,300 men on nights. (And they were doing assembly jobs?) No, they weren't doing assembly jobs - they were operating moulding machines. O.K. - there are the moulding machines, in the moulding shop - I expect you've seen those. All sorts of moulding machines, the very small ones and the very big ones .. and simply, the women would work with them up to 10 o'clock - from 6 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night, on 4 shifts - 4 four-hour shifts. The men would take them over at 10 o'clock at night - then work them through the night until 6 o'clock in the morning. And they would take over directly what would, normally be considered to be a woman's job.

(So, you've never tried to use men on the assembly-type jobs?)

"Not on the assembly jobs, no. I can't visualise men - doing that light assembly work, and that intricate work. I ... we've never tried it, therefore, I don't know what the problems would be in doing so - I just don't reason ... I cannot imagine a man, doing that type of work ...

(What happened in Ireland? They only got employment subsidies for giving employment to men?)

"Oh, they used men over there, Yes, Yes ... er, but they used to use boys, they didn't use men. They used 14 or 15 year olds at that time. And obviously they phased out ... er, when they were about 18 or 19 the boys didn't like this type of work, so they tended to either leave the company and go elsewhere ... er, or go on the dole ... (They'd rather go on the dole?) Well, I gathered they did, anyway - they'd get the employment sub. back. But its a monotonous job to get men to do..."

Men and women workers, segregated in terms of their jobs and type of work, were also physically separated in terms of their areas of operation in the factory. The areas where men worked were either separate, enclosed areas, walled off from the main body of the factory, which <sup>was</sup> otherwise "open plan", or outside the main building altogether (e.g. stripping shop, EPS plant and the garage). Some of these areas, for example EPS plant, maintenance dept., toolroom, carpenters and building maintenance, garage, stores and warehouse would have been 100% male areas. On the other hand, apart from the canteen, no area was exclusively female, on account of the fact that male setters, maintenance, servicemen and management, would operate there. Nevertheless, their numbers, in relation to the women workers, were very small. On main assembly, in one section of 8 lines, there were 8 servicemen (1 per line), 3 men in stores and 3 or 4 inspectors working with 500+ women. Of the 800 employed in plastic moulding, some 15 - 20 were men - supervisors and servicemen. Even so



it is true to say, that wherever the men worked, they all had "their own area", whether it be an office, a separate "shop" or a few seats in a corner set apart:

(Do you have any problems between men and women workers?)

"We've got very few men working in with the females. But even then, there's no problem of them working together - except at Christmas time. And of course when they get the drink in them, from outside - the majority are from places outside - then you do have problems. In which case, you hammer the males very hard indeed. In fact, we lock them away in their departments and don't let them out. And we say, "That's your area, and you stay there! If we find you out ..." No matter what their responsibilities normally would be, we turn round and say, "That's your area - you stay there - if you're seen outside, you're suspended!" - And that's the only way you can do it."

The majority of men were employed as indirect workers: on machine-setting, on labouring, on maintenance and in the toolroom, on quality control and above all - in management. As we have already seen, there were no women in the managerial hierarchy at all, above the level of forewoman. Even this position was a comparatively recent innovation. Forewomen had been "made up" in main-line assembly, where labour-control was most problematic and there were a larger number of supervisors (one per line plus two juniors - all females) to draw from. The forewomen over-saw two lines and reported to the superintendent of their section - all of whom were male. A significant proportion of first line supervision over women was male. Female supervisors were mainly employed in assembly, but wherever machinery was used, male setter-chargehands occupied supervisory positions, combining labour supervision with machine-setting and plant control. This technical/skill bias, unaccompanied

by any notion that women might be trained, is reflected in the Stourbridge Manager's discourse on women in management. The interesting thing about this, however, (apart from a give-away in lines 17 - 20) is his slide into a discussion of race - which would seem to indicate, indeed to pinpoint the aspect of discrimination characterising the whole account in a peculiarly clear way. (19)

"Wait a year, maybe. And I sincerely mean that. There is no bar at all to a woman taking up a management position in BSR. First of all, it is better to have women in charge of women. Any where you need technical work, you'll need men, obviously - in the machine shop, you'll need men. But, I think with a few exceptions ... I think most of the foremen are women. Except where there is a definite technical bias, in which case there's men - the machine shop is the obvious one. You've got a tremendous number of machines there, a few men operators, and quite a few female operators, therefore, its logical that the supervision at foreman level, should be male, and they are. On the main assembly lines, you've got all women on the lines, and ... I would say ... 6 of the foremen or forepersons are female, and one is male. So, you've got to bring sufficient males in, to keep a more ... level of top management, fairly ... males, fairly high. Because, I can't imagine at this stage, seeing a female factory manager. Not at this stage! But I'm not ... that doesn't mean to say that ... I've certainly got no objection to one, I've no objection to a factory-area manager ... I've no objection to female superintendents. Its just that the time isn't quite right to make them up into ... er, into those positions. Its a very slow growth and generally, female emancipation has only been going on for a relatively short period of time. So, I honestly see no reason at all, that in the future there won't be female superintendents, or even higher".

(In what way are the women not ready yet? - to be superintendents or above?)

"I'm not saying there's any particular reason. I think BSR moves as fast as any other company. But, we just haven't reached that natural level of evolution, that's all. They've got to be there at the right time and the right vacancies, and the right person has got to be available - and they just haven't been there at this time. But its certainly no policy not to have women any more than

there's no policy not to have coloured girls. We just keep the coloured girls to a certain percentage, that's all. Or at least, I won't say a certain percentage, we just keep a ... a balance. (What sort of balance do you keep?) We don't ... we haven't got any percentage to work to ... er, we wouldn't like to see a ... You see, the problem is when you start employing coloured girls, you can get ... er, groups of coloured girls - which are then going to form cliques and clans. And we don't let that .... Barry White (Factory Manager). (20)

In this section we have looked at how the company's labour force was divided along sex-lines. When this distribution is examined we find that men and women can largely be differentiated according to power and authority relationships, the actual job and type of task and the operating area where these are carried on. What kind of implications arise from this?

We would first argue that the sexual division of labour with men in positions of power has important implications for the nature of managerial control over a female workforce, for the type of production methods used and for their style of application. This is not to say that females in management would be "better", but to recognise that sexism is a distinctive feature in the social relations of production. (21) Moreover, such a view must be extended to the shop floor where men and women are not only separated according to their different physical location, roles in and experience of the productive process, but also differentiated in terms of wider social roles and unequal power relationships prevailing between the sexes. What are the implications of male/female inequality and sexism within the workforce for managerial control? This question is examined subsequently where these divisions are seen to have debilitating consequences from the point of view of shop floor organisation, solidarity and the nature of both men and women's responses to management. (22)

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Meanwhile, we have seen that the distribution of men and women workers in the labour process at BSR was patterned distinctively along sex lines. One consequence of this is that as the roles of men and women in the labour process tend to differ, so will their experience of it, and also the nature of the problems that they each have to confront. Insofar as the labour process itself is organised differently according to the different areas of production, then it can be assumed to throw up different kinds of problems for the men and women workers in them. Moreover, if as we have suggested the effectiveness of managerial tactics (such as speed-up and work intensification) might also tend to vary according to the nature of the underlying organisation of the labour process, then it can be assumed that the problems for men and women workers which arise from those tactics, will be thrown up and, therefore, experienced on a different scale.

We, therefore, go on to examine some aspects of how the labour process was organised in relation to the women workers especially. Specifically, we are going on to consider what might perhaps be seen as the more "technical" side of the division of labour - to the extent that it is, apparently, structured in accordance with the productive system. Since, however, it is clear that the latter is far from being patterned on a purely "technical" basis, our focus remains on the structure of social relations within it, concentrating on the particular areas where the women were employed.

We consider first, the aspect of separation and fragmentation consequent upon management's division of the production process into its constitutive elements. We then go on to identify some of the different forms of cooperation found in the labour process which, again,

structures social relationships. Both of these aspects of the division of labour have implications for both management and workers' patterns of control.

The division of labour and forms of cooperation in the labour process

This section looks at BSR management's methods, in terms of the division of labour and the organisation of production. Their aim was to maximise labour productivity - if possible, to increase it, and at all times to maintain vigilance against workers' activities which might have an opposite effect. Management, therefore, required a high degree of control over the labour process. To a significant extent this was attempted by breaking down operations such that labour could be cheapened and at the same time their activities more closely controlled. Without assuming the inevitable "success" of these methods, three aspects of the division of labour are identified as having important implications in terms of the way workers are "collectivized" on the one hand and differentiated on the other, within the labour process.

In the first place, the breaking down of productive functions results in spatial separation of groups of workers. Secondly, the extensive sub-division of the labour process tends towards homogenisation and also fragmentation of workers. Finally, within each area, the way workers relate to each other is structured, not only in terms of their physical proximity, but also the way that their jobs inter-relate and in this respect a variety of different forms of cooperation can be identified which both integrate and differentiate the workforce.

#### FACTORY LAYOUT

While a formal or technical interdependence can be established with respect to each part of a differentiated production process, proximity and the way that workers are physically grouped is, of course, a crucial aspect of their inter-relationships. Through the division of labour the factory space is sectioned off - in a manner which tends to follow the production sequence, if rather imperfectly. The basic design of the BSR factories was of the large, rectangular, open-plan warehouse type (high walled and with no windows), which permitted flexible utilisation of floor space, demarcation of the different areas being simply by white painted floor lines. However, the Stourbridge factory, which had been considerably extended, had a couple of dividing walls, and both Old Hill and Stourbridge, had upstairs sections. Such divisions limited the possibility of workers seeing the factory as a whole and created through their restricted mobility large areas of "the unknown":

"After my accident I was transferred off the line to work upstairs. Well I'd never been up there in my life - but I managed to find my own way in the end". Pip (Sub-Assembly).

Exceptions to the "open-floor" work areas were the separate shops serving indirect functions - stores, maintenance department, toolroom and carpenters for example, all located around the periphery. And then there were the walled-off sections (at Stourbridge in the centre of the factory) housing large process-plant such as painting and plating. It has already been pointed out how sexual divisions structured production functions, and clearly, thereby, they also structured the utilisation of space. "It so happened" that most of the male workers had resort to a smaller, concretely bounded space, and the majority of the women were massed on the open floor.

But they were not, as a superficial glance might suggest, simply amassed.

The women workers were divided into departments (designating factory area and main productive function) and within these, subdivided into sections. Sections could comprise one major or a number of smaller, working groups. Division of the labour process structured these social divisions and also the tasks the workers performed.



#### FRAGMENTATION IN THE LABOUR PROCESS

Apart from supervision, all the women's jobs in the factories had been broken down to their simplest elements and it was all fast repetition work. Work cycle times give the best indication of this though they varied of course, depending on the type of model being built, and for individuals in a team, depending on the operation performed. On the main lines the average job cycle was around 15 seconds. But at Old Hill where basic models were built, it was nearer to 12 seconds. On sub-plates a team producing 400 an hour made one every 9 seconds. An experienced operator on a heavy press turned out 1 main-plate every 8 seconds. Reaching forward to place the main plate onto the tool to press out the holes, sitting up to pull on the bar operating both guard and tool, stretching forward again to remove the plate, clear scrap from the tool and replace another plate, she rocked rapidly backwards and forwards in perpetual motion.

In paint inspection 5 girls took two main-plates each from a jig carrying 10 which arrived every 15 seconds. For each one they inspected both sides, examined 4 cups, initialed and packed them within 7 seconds. On individual assembly, women putting together umbrella centre spindles had to produce a minimum of 1 every 15 seconds. Flat out they might do 1 every 12 seconds. On the other hand, the construction of the speed-change arm assembly, consisting of more than a dozen small parts, springs and washers would take an experienced operator 45 seconds. Management had tried, unsuccessfully to break this job down:

"Originally, when I first went on this job, we worked in a team; and then about 3 years ago they came and changed our method of working - individually - which, incidently, is an improvement".

(As a team, although they all got on with each other, they had not been able to make a 'go' of the work.)

"You'd get one that was slow and one that was fast, and the one that was fast would get rather frustrated with the one that was a bit slow - some of the girls just couldn't get the hang of it." Sally (Sub-Assembly). (23)

The advantages to management which accrue from extensive sub-division of the labour process are held to be obvious (too often, unquestioningly so). It is assumed that such methods yield a reduction in labour costs through its cheaper price as a result of de-skilling, together with greater productivity as a consequence of increasing both the speed of the worker and the scope of management control. (24) These aspects are briefly considered, in relation to BSR management's production policy.

Leaving aside the question of how skills are defined, the extent to which this component governs or is reflected in the wage/price that labour can, in any period command, is extremely problematic. But this is not to deny that the process of "de-skilling" or "job degradation" can effectively cheapen labour. With jobs broken down to their simplest elements, no training is required beyond a few minutes demonstration and time to pick up speed. To a certain extent, the skill level is thus "homogenised" and jobs rendered increasingly interchangeable. And so, in that sense, is the workforce, since in theory, anyone should be able to do any job. At BSR, no woman had a job she could consider "her own" - the pithy phrase was often repeated: "no job is yours". And this interchangeability was, as we shall see, crucial for effecting speed-up and for intensifying the use of labour. In addition extensive subdivision of the labour process offered management two possible advantages, arising from the restriction of workers' activity to

the mechanical repetition of a small number of movements. Firstly an increase of speed and secondly a reduction of the operator's scope for controlling her work. This, specifically, in terms of her exercising choice and variation in both pace and mode of execution, which might affect the rate and continuity of output.

#### FORMS OF CO-OPERATION IN THE LABOUR PROCESS

Subdivision in the labour process: breaking down production in terms of its various constitutive functions and beyond this, breaking down and reducing each job task to its most basic elements, divides up the workforce. It does this in terms of sectioning parts which go to make up the productive system and individually, in terms of separating tasks performed. In some senses these resulting social divisions may be seen to advantage a management seeking to advance their scope for control, by breaking down the basic collectivity of their labour force. (25) But this is to ignore the other side of the division of labour, which does not end with the process of subdivision but simultaneously entails (re) grouping. This aspect is seen as having crucial implications for managerial control and worker's inter-relationships. It is discussed below, using the concept of cooperation by which means the labour force is at the same time integrated, and also divided again, according to the variety and arrangement of its many different forms.

The different forms of cooperation are inseparable aspects of the division of labour patterning the labour process, and structure the workers' relationships with each other. For example, a number of workers may be grouped together while being separately engaged on the same type of work: either simultaneously duplicating production of identical pieces or, alternatively, a variety of different items, none exactly similar.

Then again, workers may be engaged in doing similar tasks simultaneously, yet find themselves, nevertheless, differentiated, because their otherwise indistinguishable operations take place at different stages of an on-going (and possibly automated) process.

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Then again, workers may be engaged in doing similar tasks simultaneously, yet find themselves, nevertheless, differentiated, because their otherwise indistinguishable operations take place at different stages of an on-going (and possibly automated) process.

On the other hand, and in contrast to either of these cases, workers may be engaged in performing quite different operations to each other. But these are part of a closely linked sequence which brings the people together as a single collective unit, or "team".

Finally, groupings such as any of these described here, may be "repeated" or duplicated; with for example, a number of "teams", separately, but simultaneously, engaged in producing either identical or dissimilar components, being grouped together.

What these various forms of cooperation have in common is the arrangement whereby workers are linked, being simultaneously integrated and separated along a number of different lines: task, product, sequence. And this variety of forms of cooperation could be found in production and assembly at BSR, structuring the different ways that the workers, while engaged in their tasks, related to one another.

In the press shop, for example, the women sat at individual machines grouped in a large section, separated and isolated from each other by space and noise. Work was similarly arranged in plastic moulding where, although it was quieter, the sheer bulk of these massive machines hid the women from each other. On the other hand, operators of the individual, smaller machines could be found quite closely grouped together, since shortage of space was a significant characteristic feature of all of the BSR factories.

Sections such as painting and plating <sup>(26)</sup> were different in that much of the plant was automatic and the processes were of a continuous nature. Women loaded the individual parts onto constantly circulating jigs (a system of hooks suspended from an overhead conveyor)

and these were tended, unloaded and re-loaded as they moved through the sequence of processes, being taken off, finally, for inspection and packed into trays. The workers, operating individually or in groups at various points, were all linked as parts of this chain, and also, inside the shops - where some worked on separate, "off-line" operations - by physical proximity to each other. On the other hand, some operators, although linked by the line, worked outside the walled-off sections that the conveyor passed through, and therefore, outside the social milieu of the shop. Like, for example, the girls on the initial "jigging up" operation (hanging parts onto moving hooks), or on final removal and inspection.

In the sub-assemblies there were women who put together a complete component (mainly the smaller types), from separate parts placed in trays before them, counting off the finished ones into pans or boxes. These women sat at small individual tables set in a straight line one behind the other, separated from an adjacent row by a gangway (usually piled with boxes). Wherever it had been found feasible to arrange the work in sequential tasks, the women on sub-assembly operations worked side-by-side as a team. The work was passed on by hand, as soon as each particular operation was completed, and at the end of the line the component was inspected and counted-off into trays. A sub-plate, for example, (which was the foundation of the whole mechanism) was constructed by a line of 17 women, who, if they were experienced and the parts they were using were good, could put them together at a rate of 450 per hour.

All components destined to be incorporated into complete units <sup>(27)</sup> finished up at the main lines where the basic frame, clamped into a jig, started a journey along the conveyor belt

flanked by 50 - 70 girls sitting at stations alongside, one behind the other. These workers lifted the unit off as it came along the line beside them, worked on it and set it back again, hopefully before the next one arrived. (If, for any one or more possible reasons, the operation took too long, the continuously arriving units had to be piled up on the floor, around the increasingly frantic girl). Further along the line, below assembly, the units were plugged into power and tested by women standing in front of electrical instruments. (Mal-functioning units were sent on to line-repair girls). No unit was counted or, therefore, paid for until it was packed into boxes as it came off the end of the line. The women on the line were linked by the constantly moving conveyor and shared its pressure. Although seated in line-astern the women at either end remained in sight of each other.

Although it was fairly noisy and the stations along the belt located a yard or so apart, conversation was just about possible. It was easier on repairs and the test, where the women, standing, worked side by side and closer together. If the line was "doubled" that is, womanned on the opposite side, then a neighbour on assembly would be sitting alongside - although she was separated by the conveyor itself and the fact that she was engaged in her own sequence - a separate team and a separate workflow.

Breaking down the production process as a whole into its consecutive elements, and spatially segregating these in terms of "functional" areas, separates and divides up a workforce which is still, of course, at the same time, wholly interdependent. Breaking down the work into the smallest detail-tasks has a similarly fragmentary effect, (not only on the workforce one should note, but also on the worker herself). (28) Nevertheless, each person's work remains totally



interdependent within the production process. It is the nature and form of this interdependence which a view of cooperation provides. From management's point of view, seeking to maintain as far as possible, a consistently, and predictably, high level of effort from every worker a crucial aspect of the different forms of social cooperation lay in the extent to which individual workers could be kept exposed to the pressures entailed in this inter-dependency, and the degree of immediacy of those pressures themselves. Management's recognition of this was reflected in their preference for team as averse to individual jobs; a preference which aimed to reduce the scope of workers attempts to cushion themselves from the immediate pressures of interdependency and to increase the space within which they could exercise some choice and control over their activity. A press operator, on an individual job, (29) expressed this pressure and the need/attempt to combat it:

"The most irritating thing about this job is when they come and fetch them 2/3 at a time. When they're waiting for them - to put the cups on. I like to get a few by me, but when they come and fetch them 2 and 3 at a time you don't get a chance really". Sarah (Press Shop). (30)

It would appear that whatever the pattern or form of cooperation, the greater the degree of immediacy in the sequence, the greater the pressure on the operator, whose scope for controlling her own pace of work is thereby reduced.

#### Conclusions

In the first part of this chapter we have considered management's structure and production strategies and the organisation of the labour process. In considering how the effectiveness of the former may be related to the latter, we have noted that two particular aspects of the division of labour might serve to reinforce managerial

control. Firstly, fragmentation in the labour process can be linked to the high pace of work and to the reduced scope for workers exercising choice or variation within it. Furthermore, the consequent homogenisation of job tasks can be seen to increase the degree of interchangeability in the female workforce as a whole. It is held that this, in conjunction with movement of labour, firmly underpinned managerial strategies aimed at intensifying work and speed-up.

Secondly, the different forms of cooperation in the system of production expressed, in different degrees, relations of interdependence within the labour force. One aspect of this we have identified as highly significant from the point of view of managerial control. Where relations of interdependency are immediate, as in closely sequential operations, workers put pressure on each other to sustain the rate and continuity of their effort. And again the scope for individual workers' use of discretion and job control is thereby reduced.

Bearing in mind the sexual division of labour, we might note that both of these features of the organisation of the labour process were characteristic of those areas or jobs where only women workers were employed, like assembly. Thus we can see that, insofar as the labour process was organised differently in the different production areas, in terms of which <sup>the</sup> workforce was also sexually divided, the women workers were confronted with different kinds of problems to the men.

Beyond this, however, we have suggested that the effectiveness of managerial tactics for controlling labour's effort and increasing productivity might vary according to the underlying organisation of

the labour process. Moreover, we have shown how two aspects of the division of labour affecting the women workers in particular, might serve to enhance or reinforce such strategies. The conclusion must, therefore, be that the female workforce was confronted with problems which differed from those of the men in terms of both their nature and their scale.

Finally, we have suggested that another reason the effectiveness of managerial strategies for controlling labour and the levels of effort it expends, might vary, lies in the nature of workers' response. This itself, might vary for a number of reasons which this study goes on to explore. However, it is also significantly linked to the organisation of the labour process because this structures both the way workers relate to each other individually and collectively; and the nature and degree of control they are able to exercise over their jobs.

We have identified some distinctive features of the utilisation of female labour at BSR. To the extent that patterns in the sexual division of labour found here are repeated elsewhere, we could argue that employers' utilisation of female labour in general is distinctive. Therefore, we might see that women workers are confronted on the one hand with specific kinds of problems, and on the other with certain 'common' kinds of problems, but to a much greater degree.

In the next section we go on to look at some of the problems of the women workers in the labour process at BSR.

PART 2: WOMEN'S WORK

"It doesn't use you as a person. It's terribly boring - you know, I think you tend to get very dissatisfied with boredom". Madge (Moulding Shop). (31)

This section begins by setting out the women's problems, in order to identify the nature of some of their needs and thus, the basis of their demands. This part is specifically addressed to those problems arising from the nature of the work and the way it was organised at the point of production at BSR; although it is clear, at the same time, that the impact of these problems and the way they were experienced can in no sense be disassociated from the women's position outside the sphere of employment relations.

We begin by identifying some general aspects of the women's situation, in terms of the most characteristic features of their jobs. While these in themselves, must clearly give rise to needs and demands related to broader social and political questions - such as the kind of work people might humanly do in society, and under what conditions; we merely point here to one immediate need, the mitigation of stress, which stands out as a consequence of the women's situation.

Following on from this, we identify a key area of struggle within the labour process for the women workers at BSR, and the main problems associated with it. Discussion of some of these struggles themselves, is again left for a later section.

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"It gets boring at times, doing the same thing over and over, but I look at it as a job, you know - money". Kathy (Paint Shop) (32).

As has already been made clear in the discussion of the labour process above, the women's jobs at BSR had been broken down to short-cycle, detail tasks, as a result they were repetitious and monotonous, not to mention, fast.

"Oh yes, you get tired. I think its more or less the repetition, I suppose. You get a bit tired but ... And of course, the pace you have to go, you know". Sally (Sub Assembly). (33)

"You see any one as stands there 8 hours and does the same job - 8 hours, 40 hours a week you know - they've got to think, you know, 'My God, is there no end to this?'. Tracy (Final Assembly). (34)

"Sometimes it gets so monotonous, and you can hear the noise, the noise will vibrate like a big hammer. And sometimes, if you're sitting there quiet and - you can hear this row ... I get up and go round and talk for 5 minutes and it takes my mind off - I'm still working my machine you know, but can have a chat - and then go back round and - you're not conscious of the noise then". Madge (Moulding Shop) (35).

This kind of work is both stressful and tiring. The (36)  
compensations of employment are money and for married women especially sociability and escape from (what may be even more) stressful isolation in the home. There is nothing in the work itself which affords such compensations however - rather the opposite.

Madge works on an "individual" job - operating a moulding machine which isolates her from other women.

"I've got no-one to talk my worries and troubles over with and I bring them to work and mull them over in my head at work. And it doesn't help when you've got a boring job! You've got a lot of time to think. When you've got a job that you're doing mechanically more or less and that's what we do.

(They say women like a boring job because then they can think about their homes?). No !  
No, I'd much rather have an interesting job,  
and I think the majority of women here would ..."  
Madge (Moulding Shop) (37)

It is the sociable context of the work which is important and any small chances of relief from repetition and monotony of the jobs themselves are eagerly siezed: Jenny worked in a group on the test section of an assembly line.

"It gets a bit boring at times, but they're not a bad lot of girls that I work with, they're jolly and we have a laugh and are gay when we're working. It doesn't interfere with the job. I rather enjoy it as a matter of fact.

(What is the most frustrating thing about it?)

"Well, the repetition, I think. But, you know, one of them will go to the toilet or something like that, so you get a chance, for a few minutes of doing someone else's job - it breaks the monotony just that little bit".  
Jenny (Final Assembly) (38).

"There's a lot of repetition work .. you expect that in this kind of factory. Well the job I have, I like it, the Molex .... Of course I mean union duties does take me off it a bit, which helps a lot ....  
Well the repetition, it can play on your nerves, you know, very much. Pip (Sub-Assembly). (39)

Although some jobs seemed slightly better than others, the repetition in general was clearly recognisable as a source of stress.

"Well, we have our off days you know. But I don't dislike the job - I quite enjoy it. Yes. I'm doing repairs at the moment on assembly and you're not doing the same thing all the while, every time you pick a unit up you're doing something different .... but on assembly - yes well, you do the same thing more than 200 times in an hour, and you can get a bit fed up....

I used to do it, mind you... You used to - when you got into it and that - you was talking and that, you only looked - you were that used to doing it, you didn't even have to look at it half the time. (Did it still make you fed up?) Yes .. Very ... Barbara (Final Assembly) (40)

But another problem with this kind of work was that although the tasks were repetitive and of minimal content they often required constant attentiveness and/or concentration on the part of the operator. Kathy, for example, was taking off parts from a moving line of hooks on a jig, examining both sides and stacking them in trays at the rate of 480 an hour, or one every 7 seconds.

(Can you talk while you're working?)

"No, you can't talk. Well, if you really start talking and that, like have a conversation with somebody, you find that you're letting the work go past, you can't catch up with the track then. You can pass a few words occasionally, but you can't really have a good conversation when you're working".  
Kathy (Paint Shop) (41)

Pip had an individual job, working on electrical leads. The wires were as fine as delicate threads.

(Can you talk while doing your job?)

"Yes, I can. But some people can't, they've got to concentrate on what they're doing. It needs a lot of concentration, fine work does, and it is fine work". Pip (Sub-Assembly) (42)

Consistently maintaining the required degree of concentration and attentiveness clearly added to the stressful impact of the repetitive work. But the women were frequently subject to outside pressures which compounded their difficulties:

"Because when anything's happened at home and I come here, I can't get it out of my mind - and it can affect your concentration".  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (43)

Marital breakdowns soon translated into work problems, for example, on Barbara's line:

"There's a couple actually (Has it affected their work?) They seem to get fed up you know and I think its because their mind's on it, they're not really concentrating and they do get stock on the line. One woman has had time off. Not a lot, you know, but I think its just that much on her mind,

and she knows she's not doing any good at work so she just has a day off. Barbara (Final Assembly) (44)

Everyone said, of the jobs themselves - there was nothing to them (that was the trouble). You could be shown how to do most in a couple of minutes, but ...

"It isn't so much 'learning the job', because most of the jobs are very, very easy to pick up. It's just a matter of getting .... of working to the speed, you know, picking up speed. (Is that what most people find difficult?) I think it is, yes. Jenny (Final Assembly) (45)

(What was the hardest thing to get used to here?)  
"Keeping up with the speed and the people (...)  
I was put right on a main line, which - the main line is the fastest in the whole department, you know - and I was put on there, and I couldn't keep up, obviously, because you've got to learn the job. I mean, coming to a factory and that, and doing it, it was hard to bear - but I wanted to do it because I liked the hours, you know, and it got me out of the house. But I mean, after a couple of months, it just got easier, because every job - once you've learnt a job it gets easier and I accepted it after, you know. ... Hard at the start ! And .... the attitudes of supervision and people that I worked with, they wanted you obviously, you've got to keep up and that's it but pushing you all the while. .... As I say, it was hard to accept really for 2 or 3 months. And I was shattered for 2 or 3 months after I'd got home, and because I'd never done anything like that anywhere. And I think, I don't care what job it is - if you're on the main lines you work, work hard; same as ... The department I'm in now, it's sitting down, it's clean but it's still tiring work, because it's close work and you've got the fumes as well from the moulding - no proper air ... it's probably doing the same thing all day long that makes you tired. Anyway - we put it down to the atmosphere and the fumes".  
Carol (Moulding Shop) (46)

It was the astonishing pace of the work which most distinguished these factories within the locality. And it was the pace of the work, together with the repetition which took its toll of the women. Considered fastest on the moving assembly lines, it was hardly less so on the benches or individual jobs - as the level of the 'counts' ensured.



(What is the main reason for people leaving?)

"Well the counts on the job. Well a lot of people on the small presses can't get the counts in you see. And I know sometimes, they don't give it a fair trial, but you know, they've only to see the counts, and I think it frightens them off" Sarah (Press Shop) (47)

It was not an exaggeration for Sarah to say that the women were "frightened off". In a real sense the pace of work was feared, especially the pace on the moving assembly line.

".... a lot of these women, they panic - when they come on the line, they panic. The mere mention of the line to some of the women upstairs they go absolutely to pieces. ... I think they hear other women go home on the bus and say 'Oh - ain't we had a day today ! Oh, I'm done in like - with the pace on the line'. And these other women, as work upstairs, they think, Oh! whatever is a-going on?". Nora (Final Assembly) (48)

One of the reasons for anxiety among the older women, apart from pressures associated with not being able to keep up, was also concerned with the exhausting effects of such fast work. "The preservation of their capacity to labour", was not exactly an abstract consideration for those who went home only to start working again, and who still had to present themselves for paid work again on the following day.

"If it (the work) went through which ... you can do it some days, you'm like a rubbing by the end of the day - you'm no good for nothing. I mean, I know I'm old, but the young ones are the same. When you get young girls, 17 or 18 and they come back and say, I had my tea and went right to bed last night. Well, what life is that? That's no life. And this is what happens if you've done a really good day's work here." Eunice (Final Assembly) (49)

Above all, it was the stressful nature of the work, and the way it was organised which the speed further compounded, that

constituted the heart of the problem:

"One girl, away for a week, came back last Monday. I asked what she was away for - 'Were you ill?'. She says, 'Oh yes, I had another turn with me nerves, I just went to pieces'. You see these women are working at such a stress there's 210 - 220 units coming down on her, and they get stocks on the floor, and they're all tensed up. And as I say, different people - some might see stocks on the floor - one person, and she'll say, 'Oh blow it! Let it stop - somebody'll have to come and clear it up'. But you get another one that worries - you know and of course, gets all tensed up. We often get the women throw tantrums, and put their jackets on and walk out. And we have to go after and them: 'Don't do that! Put your bag down, calm down, go down the nurse, and something like that ... 'Don't walk off!' - 'cos the attitude here is, once they walk off the job, that's it. They've left, which is wrong ... "

Nora (Final Assembly) (50)

Apart from taking a personal toll of the worker, the tension and stress generated also inhibited performance of the work itself. There appears to be a central contradiction involved in doing this type of work quickly: it actually requires relaxation. A lot of the jobs were fiddly and demanded a deftness and accuracy that tension in the worker only destroyed:

"I was on the mats at the time and I couldn't keep ... I wasn't much good on the mats you see. Now that's - you've got to be very relaxed for that job you know." Carol (Moulding Shop) (51)

Carol was on an individual job, and she couldn't make the required count. On any team job, the work just kept on coming, anyway:

"Some of the screws are very small and you just can't do it if you are tense and worrying. Before you know where you are you've got a pile of work. I wonder some of them don't have a nervous breakdown!" Ethel (Final Assembly) (52)

And then the pile of work itself became a source of tension:

"It's not a matter of learning the job its getting the speed up. And if you've got to put them on the floor, well, you're nerves are all upset. I mean I've been on the lines - I've

worked on the lines, but if I've got to put one on the floor I feel as if I aren't doing my work - and you don't work so well. So a new girl is going to feel even more frustrated".  
Eunice (Final Assembly) (53)

The problems and pressures associated with the work and the way it was organised stand out with particular clarity when viewed in terms of a newcomer. As might be expected, it was particularly difficult for new employees. They were invariably put straight onto the sections requiring more labour - more often than not, the main assembly lines. (They were given four weeks to pick up speed, under conditions that were hardly conducive to it. They were sacked if they could not "prove their worth" to the company, at the end of this period).

".... Some didn't come up to the mark, and they had to go. We had 7 on our line, straight from school, no training, they just had someone with them for a while to keep an eye on .... It's a bit sad really, some of them they had to get rid of - because they'd either come right from school, or out of a different environment altogether. But to walk into the BSR .. There was one young kid I remember and she wasn't good enough and she did, in the end, have to go - because they give them 4 weeks. And her said to me, her said, 'I'm taking me a bit of time to settle down. When I go to bed on a night, every time I close me eyes the work's coming at me'. And this is what it's done to some of them. Some adapt more easily obviously, we're not all the same. But it does take some longer. That's why I think the 4 weeks should be extended, to cater for those few. Because they can do the job, but it's just the pace. If they start worrying about their job you can guarantee they'll have a stock on the floor. But that's not taken into consideration when the 4 weeks are up - they either make it or they don't"  
Ethel (Final Assembly) (54)

As pointed out earlier in the chapter (see Part I ), a very important source of pressure, particularly on team-work jobs seemed directly to derive from co-workers. (Although the actual sources of pressure emanated from the organisation of the labour process,

and the employer's driving which co-workers mediated). This pressure too is felt most strongly by newcomers, although it is there for all.

"Its frightening really, because when you're at school you're so innocent aren't you? - of people. I mean you're playing around really, then all of a sudden you come into a factory - you've got to work and ... sometimes you'll get people that'll help you out (but) there's times there's people by you that ... they think you're a hinderance you know - in the way. You can hear them moaning about you, you feel ... and you're trying to really rush and you can't . . you know: its terrible ! It's an awful feeling". Edna (Final Assembly) (55)

The experience of newcomers throws into sharp relief the pressure of naked exposure to the work and work relationships, without any controls or protections in respect of either. However, these may be built up over time, and they appear to comprise two important elements. Firstly, technical co-ordination: that knowledge and habituation to the job which gains the worker relaxation, and often, more time. (Especially if she alters or refines some of the movements). Secondly, social coordination: that experience of mutual cooperation and organisation which gains for group members mediation and regulation of the pressure deriving from management's driving and their own interdependence.

In this section so far, we have identified some of the problems arising from the nature and organisation of work at BSR. Both job content and the work rate were experienced as being stressful, and a common need expressed by the women concerned gaining relief from this. Particular requirements, therefore, entailed gaining relief from the repetition and monotony and gaining control over the pace, rhythm and effort-demands of the work. It is clear that the impact of this labour process, as it was experienced and

expressed by the women workers at BSR, was not confined to the sphere of waged work alone. Thus, the demands of the married women regarding the nature and organisation of their work, for example, sprang from and also combined their experience as workers, wives and mothers.

Since we are interested in examining the women's efforts to impose controls over the labour process in relation to their needs, it is important to specify these more closely and to identify some priorities. While broadly their demands concerned both job content and work rate, it is the latter which assumed overwhelming importance:

"The rat-race! Working piecework - the pace it's never altered. I'd worked piecework before, but I'd never seen anything like this. It's too hard. And we want it changed ... Take yesterday, we never stopped - they keep you going all the while, they think you're Robots". Lorna (Final Assembly) (56)

The reasons for the over-riding significance of work-rate over job content, and the women's need to exercise control over it can be briefly stated. It was because they were continuously subjected to speed-up and labour intensification backed up by disciplinary action. The specific question of job content is certainly linked to work-rate, in the sense, for example, that the term "deskilling" describes processes of dividing work which are integral to speed-up and intensification of labour. But in this labour process the major struggles over job content: the process of devaluation and degradation of skills, lay in the past - with the onset of modern large-scale mass production; and in a different form in the future, with the onset of more fully automated production processes. In this period the ratio of fixed capital employed at BSR remained

relatively low and stable, and productivity increases were made through speed-up and intensification of labour. Nevertheless, here and there new types of machinery and technology were being introduced. In terms of the original product itself, for example, micro-electronic controls were being built in to older-style record players, where they sat beside mechanical switches, and already, "pure" micro-electronic products were being developed. But these changes, piecemeal at this time, did not impinge on the mass of women workers with the same immediacy as the processes of speed-up and work intensification. And these related directly to the major problem experienced in this labour process - the pace of work.

#### Speed up

As indicated in the first Part of the Chapter, speed-up and intensification of work were integral aspects of management's production policy. Some instances of the first are considered here, in relation to different work processes: individual, group, automatic and manual jobs. In terms of them all, however, a consensus of opinion pointed to faster, harder work - particularly dating from when the piecework system was extended to cover most operations early in the 1970's.

"..... It wasn't so fast then, when I came - because there wasn't piece work. I was on tape decks - they were making tapes, and it wasn't really piece work you know - they didn't come down like they're coming now. I think if I was a new starter now, I think I'd be terrified - I think I'd go back home! You know, the way they're coming down the line now - this piece work, but before, it wasn't so bad."  
Edna (Final Assembly) (57)

Madge was put into the moulding shop:

"I was on inspection and we used to have a laugh. We had used to have a laugh! You don't get laughs now". (Did you find that you

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Madge was put into the moulding shop:

"I was on inspection and we used to have a laugh. We had used to have a laugh! You don't get laughs now". (Did you find that you

were under pressure?) 'No - the others were all on the lines. I wasn't. Our shop is very good actually. But still its more difficult now than it was, you've got a lot of pressure from the count. We are all working an awful lot harder than what we used to work."  
Madge (Moulding Shop) (58)

The new system involved the imposition of a minimum count. There were, in fact, many jobs in the factory which were not on piecework at all, in the sense that earnings might be made to vary with output. These were paid on a 'fixed performance'. As far as possible though, for all jobs, a minimum output was specified by management and this 'floor' was held up by disciplinary controls. For example, on the moulding machines:

"when you get a new job on and they change the tool, the first day they don't expect a performance out of you, they don't say anything. But if you don't get the performance 3 times in a week, then you're in for a warning".  
Madge (Moulding Shop) (59)

But in some cases the work requirements were so varied that it was impossible for management to specify a minimum output. Carol's job on de-flashing was like this. Her task was to trim extraneous plastic from moulded parts with a sharp knife, and the amounts plus difficulty of doing so varied constantly. Nevertheless, her account illustrates the way speed-up was imposed on "individual" manual jobs wherever possible.

"Well, they do come round, not very often, and see. The time and study come round, but he hasn't been round for quite a bit. My opinion is they know full well that they can't put us on a piecework rate, because some days - it's the same with the mat cutters - some days, they can have lovely mats the next day they're tough. The same goes with putting us on an hourly count, because the work is different every day. They have tried.  
Carol (Moulding Shop) (60)



SPEED UP OF MANUAL JOBS (INDIVIDUAL)

Carol was working on the mats to start with - a job which many people were tried on but few could do. It entailed cutting out a perfect shape by hand with a sharp knife, circumscribing a glass pattern. The condition of the mats and the style required varied considerably and the job required skill and experience. Work study men came to set a minimum count while Carol was learning to do this job:

"The people that were good mat cutters, I think they did 90 - 100 (an hour), and they were expecting 150! (How many were you doing?) As I say, some days I could do them, other days I couldn't. I bet I only did about 70 - as I say I wasn't no good at the job, that's why I was took off after and put on the other job. I'm on about the average mat-cutter, they cut about 90 - 100 and they were expecting about 150 - which they couldn't do anyway. There was a couple of women that did do it, but I mean, they only worked mornings and they'd done it for years, about 9 years, and they showed as they could do it, but I mean its rubbish because every continual hour nobody can do that much. Because the first couple of hours you work well, but towards, say the end of the morning, such as 11 o'clock to half 12, everybody's reflexes are getting a little bit tired and you start fresh on an afternoon. But, I mean, you couldn't keep up with a count like that, every hour ..."

Carol (Moulding Shop) (61)

The concept of an "approved performance" at BSR meant one that had "been proved" i.e. it had been done, therefore, it could be done. The use of part-time workers to speed-up full-timers was generally recognised as a problem. As Nora said of the 9.30 - 3.30 shift workers:

"It's a good shift that is as well, because you'll find the women working shorter hours - they get more out of them. I mean you get to 2 p.m. and they're all tired and things like that".

Nora (Final Assembly) (62)

The procedure of setting the minimum count was clearly integral to the speed-up imposed on the women rather than piecework per se. One area which was particularly notorious for its "impossible" counts was the leads section upstairs. Here the level of performance required to earn the minimum day work rate was so high that most workers had to have their money made up. The implication of this was that if they were paid what they actually earned, it would come to less than the guaranteed minimum wage and the company was therefore, "paying the women for coming". In practice, it meant that the women were working flat out for minimum pay, and it would be thought, could be speeded up no more.

The company were still looking to reduce production costs, however, and on one particular operation, had introduced a new machine. The job entailed separating out fine wires in a skein, twisting the ends and feeding them into a machine which crimped a small terminal on the end when operated with the feet. Molex had offered to supply to BSR's specifications, machines which were much cheaper than the other short-amp machines in use. Over several months, they had sent engineers to sort out problems and make modifications until at last the older machines could be phased out. But the older machines were quicker. The gap from the tool to the work was shorter.

"They are maintaining these new machines should be able to turn out as many as the short-amp machine - and its impossible. I had one woman who got a 100 performance on the short-amp and she can't get anything near that on the Molex. And they've tried to make it the same count. Can you tell me that's right? ..... we were on the job six months before they came and timed it. What they do - when they put you on a new machine, you have to write down your output every day. This gradually builds up over time. Then, after say six months, they ask BW to come and

time it. He keeps a check on the figures. The women have been working the machines for eight months, and they still can't make the times they're supposed to. The short amp machine can do 70 more an hour. Management wanted 160 per hour from the Molex - and it's impossible. The women won't accept it - they'll do 100 per hour for day work (the minimum wage) But not 175 - that's nearly double!" Pip (Sub-Assembly) (63)

#### SPEED UP OF MANUAL JOBS (TEAM)

Even on group work, minimum counts were established and demanded. Downstairs a team of women on bench work were brought together to build up a section of the turntable. They were timed and set to produce at a 95 performance level, a process which took 3 months to organise and coordinate. Later another line, of younger girls, was put in to do the same operation. For six weeks they had been on the job, paid at a 75 performance (i.e. as a no-value job, rather than according to their output, which would have increased with practice). Management reckoned they should be producing the same number as the first team. But the first operation of the original group was on an automatic press, while the younger girls were using a manual one ... They would have to work much harder for the same money as the original team, and meanwhile, because they were being paid as a "no-value" job, they received no more money for the increased output they had already achieved with greater coordination and habituation on the job. Instead of using "incentive," management had, in fact, chosen to adopt a disciplinary approach to achieve the speed-up they required.

"He's trying to say it wasn't the manual (press) that was holding them back - it's themselves - that they're not working as a team, they talk more and that's because they're younger". Pru (Sub-Assembly) (64)

On the assembly lines, as pointed out above, the counts had gradually been pushed up over the years ("187 (per hour) used to be a good count a few years ago, but now its over 200") Pearl (Sub-Assembly). But the performance levels at which the women were paid, had dropped:

"they require the same count for the new unit as the standard one - they did 240 an hour for 110 performance for the day. The new unit has a higher value but they're still expecting 240 - and the operators are only getting a 96 performance". Jill (Supervisor: Final Assembly) (65)

To some extent the count per hour would tend to rise as organisation and coordination in the labour process improved. But as this had happened, performance (or pay) levels had been dropped, so that they were producing the same count for less money. (66) Also the rate of production had been forced up by demanding, for example, that the new unit value rated at 1.5 per minute, be produced at the same rate as the old one, value rated at 3 per minute. Whereas, on the automatic paint flow-line, the workers' workrate might be increased to the extent the machinery itself was speeded up, (67) the operations on the assembly line were manual and workspeed could only be pushed up by means of a faster conveyor, to a limited extent. It was the operators themselves who had to work faster to increase output.

Nora's (9.30 - 3.30) line were on the new unit, and management were pushing for higher output:

"On our line they want 220 an hour. They can do 210 - but the women are working at such a pace they couldn't possibly do any more - not every hour. You see some hours you may get 240 out but other times - 160. (But) ... no-one on this unit can get a good performance. We're either waiting for parts (from upstairs) or just working flat out to earn 100 performance. The women don't think they get value for the amount of work turned out. And this is the unit they're selling most of". Nora (Final Assembly) (68)

Under pressure of full order books, management needed the new units and had already arranged that the women on this line would be paid at 100 performance if they produced 1000 per (5½ hour) day - without taking into account the number who worked on the line (otherwise extra workers might achieve the output but lower the pay all round). But they wanted the women to work faster as well - so they tried an old trick:

"Well the supervisors came up and said, if we did 1100 that day the women would get 120 performance. So they worked very hard and got 1128 that day. But the performance on the board on the Monday was only 105. Well, the women came back to me like a ton of bricks ! I had thought meself - believe when you see it. Mr Smith has always said - they'll never pay you here for work not done. Anyway, I went to see the superintendent and he said he hadn't told them that - but I said what the supervisors had told the women - 'Oh', he said, 'that was only a big joke. It was just a joke between me and Mr White ....' " Nora (Final Assembly) (69)

As it happened, the superintendent got into trouble for this, as the women threatened to stop work and dropped their performance. It didn't help the company to pay them at the lower level since they needed the output, at the time, so in the end they reverted to the original arrangement of paying 100 performance for 1000 per day. At a later date, however, that 'proved' output of 1100 would be demanded as the normal, required count.

#### SPEED UP OF MACHINE-PACED JOBS (TEAM)

Kathy worked on the continuous process paint line.

(Has it gone faster since you started?)

"Hard to tell, they used to put 5 main plates to a jig and now they've got a new paint machine and there's 10 on. So we're taking more off. But we've got more people on - 5 instead of 4 on the job. But when you ask them about it, they say that's right, they say they was being generous when they gave us 4 to 5 main plates".  
Kathy (Paint Shop) (70)

As an inspector she is paid at a fixed performance (90) while operators in the paint shop are paid on the piece-work system.

"But the office pointed out that they always leave 5 on inspection whether they've got 1 or 2 paint machines going. They say well, you're still being paid your 90 performance, but you're not earning it, because you're not getting as much work coming down". Kathy (Paint Shop) (71)

One day she came back from lunch and found the women complaining that some men had been down and speeded up the line:

"I told them they had to go through procedure, and as the supervisor wasn't there, the women went to the foreman about it. He said it hadn't been speeded up and to leave it for a day. The women still weren't satisfied, so I went to find out more and they said it was moving 1 second faster than normal. I know it doesn't sound much, but those seconds mount up .... What the second is, is 1 second shorter interval between each jig. The women said they would go on strike if it wasn't put back right. But they (management) said, what had happened was, that the track had been going slow for months and therefore they had to bring it back up to its proper speed. Well the women in the paint shop who actually put the main-plates on, said it was going faster, because they couldn't fill the jigs up. Instead of getting 10 they were only getting 8 or 9 on. Therefore it proved it was going faster. But they tried to say that it wasn't. Anyway, we tried everything we could you know, and they says - the one gaffer says 'Oh it was going faster and I've had it put back right now, but nothing was said about it'. Kathy (Paint Shop) (72)

SPEED UP OF MACHINE-PACED JOBS (INDIVIDUAL)

On the moulding machines which worked on a fixed cycle, the women - all paid on a fixed performance (85) - had to take off the finished piece before the process could be repeated. The job could be speeded up by shortening the machine's cycle time (but there were technical limits to this) or shortening the time between cycles by speeding up the women engaged on operations such as trimming, inspecting and packing the parts. This work varied according to the nature of the parts and so did the machine-cycle time. On the job presented here to illustrate speed-up in this department, the women had to insert a metal spindle into the machine's tool to begin the cycle. Onto this spindle plastic fitments were then moulded automatically.

"This is the horrible thing about it, they're not supposed to retime without the job being altered. But we've just come, and they've altered the count, they've put another card in. There's a card on the machine tells you what an 85 perf. is. You'd come and your count had gone up, you'd got to do a few more. (We had it a lot all round the factory, it usually happens just before our pay rise is due actually - each year) With this particular job the count was about 112 an hour and it went up to 117 and then up to 123, then it went up to 130 - something, and you know they just ... And these counts were going up and the girls were saying - 'We cannot get it out! No way can we get it out'. The women were forgetting to put the spindles in - the machine would get blocked up and have to go into tool-room and the women would get a warning. (That hasn't happened much lately but it used to happen a lot). But, when you get them out, they're red hot, and you've got to de-flash and put them on a gauge check, clock them in like, and then pack them into trays. And in the finish, they were so hot - they wear 3 pairs of gloves - and by the time they'd took them off the machine and put the spindles in shut the machine up for it to mould again, deflashed off, clocked it up and put in the tray - they were setting fire to the tissue paper in the tray! And of course the women were going mad. 'I can't get the count out'. They were going home absolutely shattered, those women, literally exhausted, you know. And I said, 'Barry, this is no good, they can't keep this up'. And it's - 'Paul's done the timing' you know. I said, 'I don't care, they can't work that hard'. They come here to work. I said 'they don't come to slog themselves into the ground Barry'. (His reply was) 'It's possible for them to do it, so they've got to do it'. Madge (Moulding Shop) (73)

Work intensification

The moulding shop with its expensive machinery was a relatively highly capitalized sector of production. It was a particular target area for raising productivity by speed-up and work intensification. The latter involved increasing the utilisation of the operator's time by allocating additional work "to fill in the spaces of the working day", as well as raising the rate at which work was carried out. Ultimately management hoped to have one woman operate more than one machine, (74) but in the period of the study, this had not (yet) been put into practice.

Meanwhile, the job of machine-tending had had many tasks added, which were crammed into the gap between one cycle finishing and another starting. This period varied according to the nature of the product - from anything under a quarter to well over a minute. Now, in addition to setting up the machine at the start of each cycle and taking finished work off, the operator might also have to "de-flash" (trimming with a sharp knife), gauge/inspect, sort, (a number of different, smaller parts could be produced at once), pack and stack as well as fetch trays and bags for scrap.

"It isn't the machine cycle time that's the problem, it's the bits you have to do in between". Madge (Moulding Shop) (75)

The process of intensification had been accompanied by labour force "rationalisation", while some de-flashing was still done separately by girls "at the tables", the women on separate inspection had been disbanded and put onto the machines.



"When we had equal pay, they did a bit of a dirty trick. We'd got inspectors that were women, and they wouldn't pay them the rate of the men, and they made them come off and go on to machines. (What happened?) Well the women couldn't fight it - because the only way they could have fought it was by doing shift work - 8 hour shift work. So they did come off (They were on 10 - 2)" Madge (Moulding Shop) (76)

"Now moulders do inspection as well. It's basically the same job. But there's no separate inspection section at all - I think it finally ended when we had the redundancies (1974-75). And the fellow that was over that was made redundant". Madge (Moulding Shop) (77)

This continual process of seeking to utilise labour hours as economically and, therefore, as intensively as possible, had its impact all over the factory. First we look at its main source which lay in management's labour (recruitment) policy. Then we go on to look at its most common manifestation - on the main assembly lines - where it took the form of "doubling up" and also "bad parts". It should be recalled that underlying the intensive utilisation of labour in production was a labour-power recruitment policy which relied on the high turnover (rapid loss) and stable reserve (ready availability) of women workers. Factory (wo)manning levels were maintained, at a point as low as they possibly could be before jeopardising the output required in any given period, and absenteeism could push even these levels further down again. Both absenteeism and labour turnover rates were, however, uneven across different sections of the factory and the labour force - it was relatively higher on the main assembly lines.

"When people have been leaving they haven't been bringing new labour in and the lines were really down very very low at one time. They're not much better now, I mean we've had people start, but through people being pregnant and finding other jobs, and all that you know it soon dwindles away. And then you've got the absenteeism and that's very very bad." Ethel (Final Assembly) (78)

"Problem is, management's slow to make up replacements - I have to really push them into it. Otherwise they're dragging one off another line. It's taken me 3 weeks to get the lines filled. Today the last shortfall should be made up - for a while". Jill (Supervisor:FinalAssembly) (79)

With "rationalisation" in addition, some jobs had simply disappeared.

They used to have more floats and inspectors for example. Nora

(on line inspection) was trained by an inspector who stayed with her for 2 or 3 days:

(And now?)

"They haven't got the women now - nor the spare floats; they do try to put a float in between a 'bottom' inspector and a 'top' inspector to help but ..."  
Nora (Final Assembly) (80)

The shortage of labour impinged unpleasantly in many ways.

"This problem of going to the toilet. I mean, they're coming down and your work's there. Now, I mean where one woman will help, and do that person's job while she goes to the toilet, another one won't, so therefore she either has to go to toilet and risk being told off because she's got a stock when she comes back, or she just has to stay there and suffer". (Can't you get a float/relief?)  
"Not always, no". Jenny (Final Assembly) (81)

Since the upshot of this situation was that most of the women spent the whole of their statutory ten minute break queuing for the loo, this can be counted among the many examples of labour intensification facilitated by the labour shortage which management maintained.

#### DOUBLING-UP

The procedure of doubling-up which occurred with greatest frequency on the main assembly lines, provides a clear example of how both labour shortage and absenteeism were used as the basis of labour intensification.

"Then there's what they call doubling-up on jobs. Well, like if someone's away and they haven't got enough women to put on jobs, say if you've just got a job doing 'heights' - that's 'highing' the arm on the record-player. They might put you 'weights' on it - so you've got to 'weigh' the arm as well, and things like that". Edna (Final Assembly) (82)

(Have you had to deal with cases where people have had to double-up?)

"Yes ... when we've had very bad absenteeism ... Like we had enough labour to run the line, it was only this week - Tuesday I think, when a girl went home and they had to split her job up between the other girls - because she'd had a pass-out like. It does slow your line down". Sally (Sub-Assembly) (83)

Since each person in the assembly sequence had only been timed for one job, doubling-up could put an enormous amount of pressure on those concerned, as the others tried to maintain their usual pace. The doubling-up process was not simply used in emergencies, it was repeated daily. And as Jill's description of her job as a supervisor indicates, "balancing the line" i.e. doubling-up was (the most?) important component of it; moreover, in a closely integrated sequence of operations, it was not always easy to do. Sometimes science, in the shape of the time-study man, had to be called to the supervisor's aid". (84)

(Doubling-up?)

"Well, we do that anyway ... all the time - that is a supervisor's job anyway. ... But as I say, sometimes supervision come unstuck, because of the capability of the person she misreads the lady's capabilities. But, I mean she soon rectifies it because she does get the time and study man out to say - 'Oh, time this job, I might have put too much on 'er, and not enough on that other lady'". Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly) (85)

But most of the time, the job was done simply on the basis of the supervisor's judgement backed up by the mobility of labour rule

whereby no-one could refuse to do any job they were put on to do - even if they were not capable of doing it ...

"I put one woman who was an inspector on to motors .. she couldn't 'ave done it in a month of sundays. So I 'ad to move her onto a job which I thought - she can't even do that! Can't even see the 'oles! And ... I mean, I could ride the woman - I could really get on 'er back .... then she'd walk out. But that's what BSR want! You know, so I thought - one day I can suffer it..." Jill (Supervisor, Final Assembly) (86)

Apart from the fact that doubling-up entailed additional work, it was also more tiring and stressful because the changes in work pattern destroyed any relaxation and rhythm which might have been achieved previously by habituation to the same movements. For these reasons alone, it was much disliked by the operators. But they were also subjected to another kind of intensification which had a different impact.

#### BAD PARTS

Anything which slowed the output of the line would be reflected in the workers' pay packets as a result of the lower performances. On the whole, doubling-up did not necessarily have this effect, since the smaller number of operators, a few of whom worked harder, might gain financially in the end, because there were fewer of them to share the line's earnings. On the other hand, a full complement or extra workers on the line meant a greater number of units had to go through for the same money. In that sense it was harder (faster) work for everyone.

"They'd given us the extra labour to get the count out, but we'd also got to do a damn sight more! We'd got to pay those as well for helping us to get the count out. Our count went up - we were doing 800 - 860 (per hour) for 100 performance and now we had to do 900 - 1000 to get a decent performance...." Barbara (Final Assembly) (87)

If "doubling-up" was a form of intensification for which the workers might apparently receive some financial compensation, the situation that resulted in "bad parts" was not. The workers were only ever paid for working on parts which passed inspection. On the assembly lines, for example, they were not paid for the number of units built, only the number packed at the end of the line.

(Performance on your job?)

"We're s'posed to do 200 per hour ... but you don't - they come down, but of course, they've got to be packed off the bottom of the line. Then of course, there are so many repairs coming back that they just don't go off the bottom of the line".

Jenny (Final Assembly) (88)

It was a continuing source of bewilderment to the women workers that management should drive them for output on the one hand, but do little to cut down the bad parts going through, which slowed the rate of production on the other:

"Management could be much more helpful - and they would get more work out ! They don't seem to solve the problems which are theirs as well, even though they do affect the women a lot". Edna (Final Assembly) (89)

"It's the bad parts that they have to work with - that hinders them to get ... you know - to get their performance - they can't get their money - they're losing money. And they've told me, you know - 'Sally, if nothing's done, we're gonna down tools!' And, I've gone through the motions - seen inspectors and foreman-inspectors and ... told them the women are getting restless, they are gonna stop work. And then eventually, they've done something, you know".

Sally (Sub-Assembly) (90)

"Bad parts - every day. It's never sorted out ... A month ago we had a big fuss, got all the superintendents onto the main lines to sort it out .. If you complain enough about the bad parts -

pick up arms or sub-plates, they have the superintendent off the section and he's told to put it right. They check all the parts send them back off the line if they're not right. But then they can be just as bad again - Why? nobody knows".  
Lorna (Final Assembly) (91)

(What issue have you raised?)

"Well, only like the bad parts and things like that on the line, but they haven't been dealt with... They always come again. They're OK for a couple of weeks you know, after you've jumped up someone's back... But then, Oh, just a few weeks - it's gone again you know". Barbara (Final Assembly) (92)

The problem affected production and assembly workers throughout the factory because it lowered their count and/or made their jobs more difficult to accomplish. It was particularly frustrating on final assembly where the same units might circulate, apparently endlessly, through assembly→test→repair→breakdown→assembly ...

"How are rejects a problem?)

"Well, the unit may come to you with a fault, you send it to the repair bench and it comes back, but it may have different faults - it could come past 6 times but you're only being paid once - when it's packed.

(If compensation was sorted out - would it still be a problem?)

"Yes, because nobody likes that kind of work - you've got work all hanging round your feet. You've got it on the track above your head, it can be annoying. I've sometimes been down the line and couldn't move for rejects - management try to blame workers; a small amount may be due to not paying attention - but not all by any means. Parts produced on automatic machines, for example, if they're a fraction out - they can cause a lot of problems on the lines."  
Ethel (Final Assembly) (93)

Why was the problem apparently so intractable? The instance given below, of labour shortage and "doubling-up", this time between male setters and inspectors, shows how bad parts could arise

as a direct result of management's policy of using labour intensively. In this example, the men (inspectors) were being disciplined because thousands of rejects had been produced on an automatic machine:

"There's not enough labourers in the press shop in the evening so the inspectors clear the scrap away for the women, so that they can carry on while they're doing that. Well, they'd got 36,000 - 2 shifts worth of these damn things hadn't they! And when we asked them, turns out the inspectors had been doing this labouring. They'd also had other jobs which had been set up and they'd had to inspect the first-offs and then apparently they were short of a setter on that shift and one of them had gone to do his job as well. So we had an argument about it, and in the end they warned them. But I put a strong protest in about the fact that they were doing labouring, even though it was to help out. They told them not to, but they still do it now because it's the only way the section can run". Terry (Maintenance Chargehand). (94)

Using bad parts or materials intensified labour because operators had to work faster, to keep up the count and also harder, to cope with extra problems not allowed for in the time, to earn the same money. Management could use rejects in production to keep down wages (and output if this was required) and at the same time off-set some of the costs to themselves - of scrap, a surplus, or a shortage of components. Bad parts were, in that sense, a manifestation of management's policy of using both labour and material intensively.

"Last week, they came, they'd got switch boxes. And they'd changed the switch boxes - instead of putting them in with 2 screws, they had to tip them in. And they were very hard to get in. They could get the one side in, but the other side wouldn't go in, and it was hurting their thumbs. And apparently, they'd complained and they'd been down there to the quality control and they'd put grease on them and filed them and they still couldn't get them in, they were still getting difficulty. Well, they didn't come to me - it was 25 past 3 when we were going home, and I asked them how long they'd been like that, and they

said - all day - you see. I couldn't do anything till next morning. I saw the supervisor who said 'well, they've worked like that all day - I told them to come'. Well the foreman was brought in.... An hour later they came and said 'Oh great you've done a lovely job - they've brought some of the others'. Apparently there were 2 lots. One were shining and the other were dull. So they brought another lot down, which were the dull ones, which went in easy. And then they asked them if they'd put one of the shiny ones in occasionally to use those up ..."

Jenny (Final Assembly) (95)

"They've got a nasty 'abit actually of passing ... knowing - bad parts, components ... For example, sub-plates. P'raps because of a shortage, management's using rejects from months ago. Then they're brought onto the line, you build your unit up, and its a hard job to repair that component - you 'ave to strip it, and it's really bad". Jill (Supervisor -Final Assembly) (96)

In the first section, job content and work rate - the repetition, monotony, pace and effort-demands of the work were identified as constituting important problems for the women at BSR. The impact of these aspects of the labour-process were experienced by the workers as stressful, giving rise to needs and demands regarding the nature and organisation of their work, which aimed to mitigate these pressures. The most significant area requiring control concerned the pace of work, and indeed, as we have seen in the second section, this was a crucial issue. The women were continuously subjected to speed-up and intensification of work in this labour process. Their effort to control the pace of work had, therefore, at the same time, to be directed against these tactics, backed up as they were by the weight of management's powers to organise and dominate the labour process.

In the following Chapters we take a closer look at the use of these powers of organisation and domination: specifically



movement of labour and disciplining. In themselves, these constituted significant problems for the women workers and their impact was, again, stressful. They gave rise to further sets of needs and demands regarding the organisation of the labour process and the nature of the employment relationship.

As we have seen, at a broad level, these needs included the mitigation of stress, protection of the individual's "self" and preservation of their capacity to labour. More immediately, perhaps, it will be seen that the women workers' needs and demands regarding the exercise of management's organisational and disciplinary powers, were directed, quite crucially, at preserving employment security and job controls. These constituted the only basis on which the women could attempt to break the vicious circle whereby they were both hired and penalised on the same basis - their domestic commitments. To achieve this break they had to push back management's disciplinary offensive and push forward their own requirements. These being for terms and conditions of employment which were positively oriented to the demands of social reproduction and "people-care". In order to do either, they had first to establish a stronger position in the labour process and this depended on increasing employment security and job controls: both of which were linked, and both of which were continuously being undermined.

CHAPTER 4

PRODUCING THE BSR WAY

- (1) Discussion 2/76.
- (2) Discussion 2/76.
- (3) For example stockbrokers Rowe & Pitman's reference to "BSR's undoubted long term strength and its quality of management" (Irish Times 22.12.1979)  
The Financial Times reference to "the company's undoubted management skills" (Financial Times 13.9.1980), and  
The Times' financial editors reference to BSR's "sound management" (Times 13.3.1980).
- (4) Comment of Union Official (Paul Silver)
- (5) Discussion 2/76.
- (6) Particularly in relation to the consumer products division and the acquisition of Bulpitts (1971).
- (7) These positions appeared to be particularly stressful: two years prior to my visit one factory manager had died from a massive coronary. His predecessor suffered from bad nerves and was on tranquilisers. The young manager of the new plant had been found, on occasion, clearly distressed. Two older factory managers whose companies had been taken over, were ill.
- (8) See above pp. 130 - 132
- (9) When the newly built factory at Garretts Lane was started, no such facility existed. "He (the Manager) can sit on a stool in a corner, until that factory is producing" quoth: John Ferguson, "until then what business has he in an office?"
- (10) CIR (1970) pp. 12-16
- (11) Inbucon (1977) p.17
- (12) Management-union relations are fully explored in Part Three of the thesis below.
- (13) Perhaps it is worth noting at this point, a number of parallels with Japanese management policies (as averse to American styles, predominant, within management training schools, at least in Europe). Albeit, in this case, stripped of their more culturally specific and benevolent/paternalistic aspects. Such parallels can be seen, for example, in the insistence on management's shop-floor presence, working experience and practical skills/abilities.  
  
"Everyone knows that our managing director can do any job on the floor here". National Panasonic employee quoted in "The Rising Sun Shines in the Valleys": Alan Road Observer Magazine, May 1981 p.36.

And also in the low status, security and conditions of administrative staff:

"Production workers were paramount in Japan, says Pat Davies.

- (13) cont'd. (AUEW Shop Steward: GEC-Hitachi). She saw plants where the secretaries barely had elbow room to operate their typewriters, but the production line was spacious. Back in Britain Japanese managers all find this quite logical. The object of their operation is the production of television sets or hi-fi equipment, not bumf. Office staff may be necessary to this operation, but they are not central to it"
- and a one union, closed shop (ibid p. 32,34 & 37) industrial relations policy:

"These methods, the last two especially, carry implications for workers (particularly white collar) and unions in Britain; which it is clearly important to recognise and confront. The more so, as Japanese manufacturers begin to follow up their market penetration by expanding production operations in Western Europe, in 'depressed' areas (such as South Wales, cited here) where cheaper labour can be found."

- (14) Ref 12/51: 373-410, 5.12.78
- (15) Discussion 19.1.77.
- (16) See **above** pp 97-98. The turnover of the female labour force is constrained by increasing dependence on waged work.
- (17) Ref: 5.12.1978
- (18) See Table 5 : Distribution of Male/Female workers: Stourbridge Factory 1978.
- (19) For this reason, the transcript is left as it continues on, although the further questions which are raised are the subject of discussion below in Chapter 5.
- (20) Ref 20-21/51: 830-898.
- (21) See Barker and Downing (1980)
- (22) The consequences are not necessarily without contradiction because, as Cynthia Cockburn has noted, sexism may be seen as comprising a strong component of male workers' internal solidarity and effective assertion of control against the employer, even if this is also a component of their lack of solidarity, and thus a source of weakness, within the wider collectivity. See Cockburn (1983) and Hardman (1983) for a discussion of Cockburn's work.
- (23) Ref: 5/81: 312-337.
- In plastic moulding however, it seemed that management were trying to 'build the job up' (rather than break it down) by the addition of extra tasks to be fitted in with the machines' cycle. Was this an example of job enrichment? Although much that goes by this name is of a similar nature, we would argue that the process was one of labour intensification. And to increase the number of repetitive tasks which have to be completed in a short-fixed period of time, is simply to increase both workload and pressure on the individual operator (i.e.) stress. "I don't feel enriched. I just feel knackered".

- (24) Whether these results occur in practice however, must be contingent upon a large number of other conditions, affecting, for example, flexible downwards pricing of labour and control costs on management's side.
- (25) Collectivised in the sense that individual workers have been brought together by the employer
- (26) Fewer women worked in Plating than Painting.
- (27) Rather than sold as separate components (e.g. cartridges) or in 'breakdown' form to be asserted elsewhere.
- (28) See Marx (1976)
- (29) i.e. producing individual items at an isolated work station, not immediately linked to another as in a team sequence.
- (30) Ref 3/S1: 121-192 19.1.1978.
- (31) Ref 15/S2: 245-50
- (32) Ref 3/S1
- (33) Ref 9/SL : 728-738
- (34) Ref 4/S1: 386-407
- (35) Ref 22/52: 822-853
- (36) And those who are single and have lost contact with their friends, e.g. girls unemployed for long periods after leaving school.
- (37) Ref 22/S2: 802-820
- (38) Ref 4/S1: 188-204
- (39) Ref 7/S1: 604-620
- (40) Ref 4/S1: 204-220
- (41) Ref 7/S1: 285-292
- (42) Ref 8/S1: 631-639
- (43) Ref 13/S2: 199-209
- (44) Ref 16/S1: 989-1018. The reference to 'stock on the line' relates to the units piling up on the moving line and then they stack up around the operator on the floor.
- (45) Ref 5/S1: 241-248
- (46) Ref 5-6/S1: 247-248; 6/S1: 320-530
- (47) Ref 13/S1: 865-875
- (48) Ref 10-11/S1: 860-928

- (49) Ref 24-25/T351: 360-384
- (50) Ref 13/52: 64-85
- (51) Ref 7/S1: 350-360
- (52) Ref 13/T2S1: 452-
- (53) Ref 28/T3S1: 670-685
- (54) Ref 12/T2S1: 354-450
- (55) Ref 2/S1: 100-120
- (56) Ref 2/S1: 183-205
- (57) Ref 2/S1: 130-140
- (58) Ref 13/S2: 110-116
- (59) Ref 14/S2: 187-190
- (60) Ref 7/S1: 335-350
- (61) Ref 7/S1: 360-370
- (62) Ref 10/S1: 839-40
- (63) Ref 30/S3: 420-487
- (64) Ref 10-11/S2: 170-180
- (65) Ref 5/S1: 393-410
- (66) "Well, like everything in life, things get bigger... and the performances have gradually crept up, by nature of skills, and easing of problems - when you start something off - 10 years ago, then you sort problems out over the next 10 years, and it makes it easier to produce. The components are more standard and they go together better ... Gradually, the performances are creeping up. Now, I like to see a performance, although its ... I'm a workstudy engineer, and its wrong to say this - I like to see a performance around about 90 - 95 and maybe 100. That gives the operator a good wage and it gives the company a good output."  
Barry White (Factory Manager). Ref: 13/S1: 440-450.  
  
Jill, the supervisor, first noticed this phenomenon following the women's pay rise under phase 1 of the Heath Government's incomes policy (four years earlier).
- (67) Although not altogether: the jiggling-up girls could not fully fill the jigs (see Kathy above).
- (68) 3/S1: 200-220 and 23/S3: 240-250
- (69) 20/S2: 800-860

- (70) Ref 4/S1: 145-158
- (71) Ref 6/S1: 225-235
- (72) Ref 5/S1: 179-210
- (73) Ref 17-18/S2: 402-460
- (74) Inbucon (1977) Appendix XI-6.
- (75) Ref 35/S4: 120
- (76) Ref 14/S2: 187-200
- (77) Ref 13/S2: 116-129
- (78) Ref 10/T2S1: 155-200
- (79) Ref 22/S3: 135-140
- (80) Ref 3/S1: 231-249
- (81) Ref 27/S2: 524-540
- (82) Ref 9/S1: 582-606
- (83) Ref 20/S2: 234-240
- (84) ... Nine times out of ten it is that the job is too 'eavy. Because some supervisors - well, all of us to be quite honest ... Its alright on a piece of paper, but when we come to practise it, we find its more difficult, because you've got different attitudes of different women. So we tend to give an extra part to a woman - who we thought would be capable of doing it - but we find out that she isn't capable. So we usually 'ave them timed there."  
(Do they ever reduce the amount that they have to do?)  
"Oh they don't do that! They just put the part somewhere else. When the time and study man comes out ... for one job there might be 4 components - he times individually, each individual component 'e puts on. So, say .... 'e's allowed 20 seconds for this component, but 'e finds that that job is 20 seconds over - you know, too much ... 'e'll then find a job down the line, fter 'es timed it: "Oh, that could 'ave that 20 seconds on!" - So 'e moves that component to there. You know, and 'e balances the line out."  
Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly) Ref 28/S3: 775-840
- (85) Ref 28/S3: 775-840
- (86) Ref 28(b)/S3: 850-870
- (87) Ref 17-18/S2: 96-108
- (88) Ref 5/S1: 208-218
- (89) Ref 9/S1: 473-490
- (90) Ref 27/S3: 203-214

- (91) Ref 7-8/S2: 36-80
- (92) Ref 10/S1: 585-595
- (93) Ref 11/T2S1: 310-345
- (94) Ref 15/S2: 1019-53-31
- (95) Ref 24/S2: 314-347
- (96) Ref 10/S1: 1018- S2: 116

CHAPTER 5 MOVEMENT OF LABOUR

"The process of manufacture and assembly of components has been broken down into simple tasks, wherever this can be done, which makes it possible for the most part, to recruit relatively inexperienced people and to train them within a short period to high performance levels. The same factor also makes it easier for employees to know more than one job which facilitates the movement of workers between jobs to meet changes in production needs and absenteeism. Flexibility and movement of labour are regarded as very important by the company. Combined with a high degree of production planning and control, this makes for high utilisation of resources and high volumes of throughput which are important ingredients in the company's success." CIR (1970) p.5.

Movement of labour was the secret of BSR's success, except that it was no secret. Labour mobility was key to management's intensive utilisation of female labour, forming the cornerstone of their production policy and system of labour control. Certainly the interchangeable nature of the women's jobs facilitated the "interchangeability" of this workforce, offering advantages which management exploited as fully as possible by insisting on adherence to the movement of labour rule.<sup>(1)</sup> Refusal to do the job they were put on constituted (self) dismissal of the worker. Managerial prerogatives in this area were the most heavily defended of all and, as we shall see, when BSR agreed to unionisation, a "full labour mobility" clause was incorporated into the agreements.<sup>(2)</sup> The non-negotiable status of this rule reflected, on the one hand, its centrality in terms of management's production strategy and on the other, the high degree of both latent and manifest opposition to mobility encountered in the workforce.

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maintain a "balance" of production between the different sections and departments, to facilitate the organisation and flow of work. It was held that this balance might be upset for two reasons, either because the pattern of production was changed and different products and/or different quantities were required, or because, as a result of time-off, sections and/or departments ran short of labour and the spaces had to be filled.

"Day to day movement of labour is entirely due to absenteeism. Because ... if we're starting off a particular section, and we want 15 operators on that then apart from very, very local - very simple movement of labour - then you would only need to move the labour, to enable you to set up that particular line. So, basically, day to day movement of labour is directly responsible ... er, caused by - absenteeism. Now if you have a varying degree of automatic changer products - whereas you want complicated changers one month, simple changers the next month, plus a few modules and then cartridges. If your requirements go up and down all the time - then you would have a different problem altogether. Movement ... from one section to another, and training them in new skills. So, the two problems are disassociated basically. You'll have the day to day movement due to absenteeism - which is the majority of our problem. Then you'll have the policy changes, where our products change, and you have to move labour from one part to another". Barry White (Factory Manager) (3).

In practice, however, movement of labour offered management much more than this. A view of its application and enforcement shows that apart from facilitating the flow of work, movement of labour constituted the central plank of management's strategies to increase productivity and control labour.

First , in the context of under-staffing, as we have already seen with doubling-up, the activity of "balancing", involving both the movement of workers and alteration of job content, was the main means of systematic intensification throughout the factory. In the second place, in the context of a fragmented labour process and

highly interdependent system of cooperation, mobility was an important means of control over labour. It could be used by management, for example, to undermine individual and collective job controls, which facilitated speed-up; to discipline workers directly to increase the rate of "natural wastage" and to eliminate the "inefficient". These are the aspects of movement of labour examined here. In Part I, we look at a further example of how management applied mobility in order to use labour more intensively. Then, in the light of earlier discussions, <sup>(4)</sup> we examine how the social relationships in production patterned the distribution of costs which resulted from this intensification, within the labour force itself. This is followed by an outline of how movement of labour could be used as a means of managerial control over workers in several other respects; using, for example, its destabilising effect on workers' relationships, both to the job and to each other; and/or its punitive aspects.

In Part II of this chapter we examine some of the implications of movement of labour for the women workers, looking in particular, at the problems of employment and earnings insecurity and the impact on job controls.

PART 1

THE FLEXIBLE UTILISATION OF (FEMALE) LABOUR  
BY MANAGEMENT.

Labour mobility and intensification

Amongst any number of examples which might be used to illustrate management's use of movement of labour as an integral aspect of labour intensification, perhaps the question of line-servicing raises most clearly the complex of issues involved.

One service-man was allocated to each line to deliver components from the sub-assembly and production areas to each station along the conveyor belt. If any contingency occurred to delay the service-man, the line would eventually be stopped when an operator ran out of parts and then the women lost whatever bonus they had already earned as their hourly average dropped.

A frequent cause of hold up was insufficient component stocks. This could be due to a number of causes: machine breakdowns, bad management organisation, insufficient machines or labour on a job etc. Whatever the cause, it would usually necessitate a greater number of trips to the different areas of the factory for parts. (There was no room for much stock to be held on the lines). Since it was, in fact, part of management's production policy to work "hand to mouth", this situation was not at all uncommon:

"No way! There is not enough servicemen in this factory to keep a supply goin', especially when parts are short. It's impossible for any human bein' to be in 3 or 4 places at once!"  
Jill (Supervisor-Final Assembly) (5)

In order to keep the lines running with the low level of stocks and service-manning required by management, supervisors whose responsibility this was, had to enlist an extra labourer from the line or fetch the parts themselves. Many chose the latter course because there was no-one at all to be spared.

"Like they take girls out and they're fetching parts - well to me that's a serviceman's job. I mean supervisors even have to fetch parts, they shouldn't have to. And our supervisor does you know, 9 times out of 10 you look for her and she's down what they call 'the pen' fetching the parts. It's wrong because she should be there on the line to run it". Barbara (Final Assembly) (6)

Jill, who was the union representative for supervision, was aware of the animosity which could exist between line operators and supervisors. Part of the reason for this, was she thought, the fact that supervisors were selected on the basis of their willingness to fetch and carry not their ability to organise production on the line - on which of course the operators' money was also, ultimately, dependent. (7)

".... unfortunately, we're gettin' some young girls, who put a blue coat on and think, 'oh, as long as I keep the line runnin' - fetchin' and carrying parts - I'm great!' But she doesn't know one unit from the next, and I can understand the members and their shop stewards grumblin' about those particular people".

".... Some supervisors will do it - for the sake of the girls, not losin' money. I won't - you can't do the job properly while you're running after parts".

(Who else does it, if you refuse?)

"Well, if the labourer can't then you ... you bring out girls. The superintendent will say - 'If you're not gonna do it, you'd better get 2 girls out'".

"I'm in trouble all the time". (Recalling an occasion when the superintendent wanted 2 women for servicing and she refused). He says 'Oh, I'm telling you, if I can find them a job, they do it'.

You can go to any of the girls and they'll tell you, I won't let 'em be abused." Jill (Supervisor-Final Assembly) (8-11)

But with the movement of labour rule the operators could not refuse to do the job if they were asked to do it. And they were, in fact, "abused".

"There's one thing I don't agree with. We get shortages of components and in order to keep the line running, they have to take 2 - 3 girls off the line to get components from A to B (the supervisor asks this) to keep the line running. Some parts can be very heavy e.g. main plates, trays of sub-plates and turntables. They are carried on trolleys, but its quite a distance over a concrete floor which is grooved and you're liable to spill the parts. But of course its that girl's responsibility not to get them damaged. In my opinion its too heavy a job. In the last few weeks its happened practically every day. It happens because they can't build sub-plates etc fast enough - can't get the components. If they have an abundance of parts, service-men fetch a rack of main-plates and sub-plates and there are plenty available. But if we have to wait for the lad to keep fetching parts we don't get the work, and there are 9 lines competing with each other for counts. If individual lines don't get the count out, the superintendent kicks us. So we sent the girls up to queue for components. Sometimes we are waiting for pick-up arms etc - waiting 5 minutes at a time. There are so many parts in the unit, you need a good stock to keep the lines running. Some of the girls, they sweat blood. There's nothing I can do about it because its "movement of labour". My heart bleeds for them.

I had one girl, who refused to carry the sub-plates, she cried buckets. I went to the superintendent - he said 'I'm sorry she'll have to do it or go'. I said I was not satisfied, I didn't think she was strong enough, she was only 7 stone and 4'11". So he said - 'see personnel'. I went to see personnel she said 'it's out of my hands - superintendent wants it done - can't we come to some agreement to do it on a rota basis?' so I went to see Ellen (Convenor) She recognised the problem - and felt sorry for the girl, she said to see the line supervisor and ask if they could do it for one hour each (3 of them), so they wouldn't get exhausted. The supervisor agreed to this". Gwen (Sub-Assembly) (12)

And of course, when an operator was moved onto servicing, her job on the line had to be shared out among the remaining workers who were moved and "doubled-up" to cover the absentee.

#### REDISTRIBUTING THE COSTS OF PRODUCTION.

Management's aim was to keep "input" costs per unit to a minimum by using labour, materials and machinery as intensively as possible. In a highly complicated and tightly integrated system of production this could lead to a shortage of components, the lack of buffer stocks laying sections bare to the immediate pressures of interdependency generated in the system. (13)

There was always a "cost" risk attached to this policy of course. A misjudgement, for example, resulting in production being halted early in the sequence, leaving large numbers of workers on waiting time. In general, however, by maintaining waiting time pay at the lowest rate, keeping it as "discretionary as possible" and minimising the occasions it might be claimed or paid, these "costs" could be deferred by management onto the workforce who "paid" with lower wages. (It was, moreover in the final stages that such shortages usually occurred). When we look at labour intensification, we see that there are other costs involved. When management "saved" on wage costs by not recruiting or replacing sufficient workers, the workforce "paid" by expending more effort: - one worker covering (all or most of) the work of two. Some of the costs of production which might otherwise be borne by the employer were, thereby, (re)distributed downwards, to be born by the workforce instead (which expended more effort for the same amount of pay).

It is interesting to ask how these costs are distributed thereafter i.e. which particular group in the workforce bears them? And with what effect? We can then see that the way these costs were distributed between the different sections of the workforce

was structured by the prevailing social relations of production. In the process, their impact could be shifted and so could their consequences.

The main burden or impact of management's "minimising" policy in the example of intensification given above, should have fallen on the servicemen themselves, who would have to increase the number of trips they made in a day to keep the lines supplied. But for a number of reasons: to do with sex-related differences of position in the labour process on the one hand, and authority related differences of position in the managerial power structure on the other, the greatest part of the burden was redistributed "downwards" to be borne by the female operators. The differences between the men and the women in the labour process is examined first.

In contrast to the female operatives, the male servicemen were paid on the basis of a flat, semi-skilled day rate, so their pay was not affected by variations in the output of the lines or their own work effort. Again, unlike the female operatives (and in common with all the other males employed) they were not subjected to inter-changeability and movement of labour of the same kind. They were employed to do a specific job, and in slack periods they were less likely to be moved onto other jobs, just as in busy periods, no other men were likely to be moved onto theirs. They had the security of their own, constant job; within which and over which they could, therefore, maintain a certain degree of control - particularly regarding the expenditure of effort. In this respect, again, in contrast to practically all of the women workers, the men had the advantages of physical mobility and the



scope to exercise a certain amount of discretion in the execution of their work. They gained, thereby, certain defences against "driving". The main pressures on them derived from the women line-workers. Even if the servicemen did try to co-operate by working harder, these pressures were to some extent avoidable, in a way that for the women operators they were not, and so it was on to the women line workers themselves that the pressure was greatest and on to whom the impact of management's production policies was shifted.

As we have seen, the supervisors were faced with a choice - to double their own workload, or to "pass it on". Although to some extent, the criteria and method of their selection for the job as supervisor seemed, increasingly, slanted towards the former "choice", the alternative still remained. And since supervision was, after all, first line management, with powers of direction over the operatives, the buck stopped at the primary work group - held by the movement of labour rule. (And pressured by the fact that it was their own pay which was being affected).

Although, even within this group, it was likely to be the most junior (or perhaps a "trouble-maker") who was delegated to do the job (i.e. to whom movement of labour was applied); others would have to "double-up", and the group as a whole took on an increased workload. Thus the social relations of production can be seen to pattern the distribution of costs which have been passed on to the work-force by management, i.e. to have consequences in terms of who, in labour's ranks, should bear them. But we have also asked with what effect? What further consequences might flow from this? In order to consider these questions it is necessary to look at the impact of movement of labour in relation to management's (and in Part 2, labour's) interests in job control.

Movement of Labour and job control

Movement of labour can be seen to constitute for management a crucial means of labour control within the fragmented labour process with its highly interdependent systems of co-operation. Some of the principles behind this argument are outlined briefly below, while the impact on the women workers in practice, is described in more detail in Part 2.

It is generally acknowledged that all workers regulate their own work effort to some extent, and in "team" or collective work it is clear, this must also entail regulating the work effort of others. Indeed mutual controls are necessary in order to achieve the basic co-ordination required to produce collectively at all, but from management's point of view, the productivity gains which accrue from such systems of co-operation are, at the same time, constantly under threat from this very same source. Because workers can use the same mutual controls and coordination in order to restrict their work effort and build up effective protections against "driving." In the interests of "efficiency", in a system of production such as this which relies, for its effectiveness, on minimising the workers' scope for discretion and autonomy, but yet has relatively limited opportunities for machine-pacing or automatic regulation, it may be necessary for management to control, as far as possible, the degree of cohesion groups of workers achieve.

"You see, the problem is (like) when you start employing coloured girls, you can get .... er, groups of coloured girls - which are then going to form cliques and clans. We don't let that ...."  
Barry White (Factory Manager) (14).

Systematic movement of labour in principle and in practice provided a means for controlling the collective strength of work groups,

and of undermining job control practices developed both by these and by individual workers. It was easier, for example, to raise the count or alter the job content when workers were being moved around.

As we intend to show in the second part of this chapter, the question of what consequences arise for the workforce, from management's application of labour mobility, is a very important one. In short, we would propose that the main impact on and of workers being moved is disruptive - of both their relationships individually and collectively to their jobs and to each other. And, overall, the effect of this is to reduce job controls and thus diminish the bargaining strength and resources of the individual or work group.

Therefore, in terms of the example of line-servicing, we can see that the greater resources for job control accruing to one group, the servicemen, made them "strong enough" to avoid and, therefore, to "pass on" the costs of work intensification - to be borne by another group, the women workers. This group had insufficient bargaining resources with which to combat management's application of movement of labour and, therefore, absorbed the costs of their labour shortage or "wage-saving" policy. One consequence of this might be seen to be yet (further) reduction of the women operatives' job controls.

Movement of labour; pay discipline and dismissal

PAY

Apart from offering management the means for systematically intensifying the work - and thus, the utilisation of labour, movement of labour could also be used by management to reduce wage costs directly - because there was no guarantee that earnings would be maintained.

"Last week, three women were asked - sweep up. They had been getting 86 performance on their jobs and instead of asking if it would affect their pay, they got the brooms and swept up. I personally have always told them not to, they should get someone in to do it ... we've argued with Smith about it before and tried to stop it. But of course they still do it. And when they drop their pay they soon moan don't they? Their pay was dropped to 76 performance and the case is still going on, and now Pearl has been brought in. But - we're not contracted as sweeper-up - we're contracted as assemblers, not sweeping up". Pip (Sub-Assembly) (15)

Workers who were moved onto different jobs might lose money in a number of ways. Where earnings varied with output, it might take some time before she picked up sufficient speed to "make the job pay". But still there might not be the possibility of getting the same performance on the new job. It might be "lower paying" in terms of the performance that was achievable on it. On the other hand, it might be a fixed performance job and the performance was a lower one. Or else it might be a "no value job" which was paid at the minimum day rate. And there was no guarantee that a worker on a new job would be paid the rate for it either - if management considered insufficient effort was being made to achieve the count during the learning period.

Informal custom and practice arrangements over pay and movement of labour had been established by workers in some areas. These differed between factories and even between departments and sections. Management had long held off attempts on the workers' side to standardise practices, or more specifically, to establish the payment (maintenance) of average earnings for workers who were moved. From management's point of view this would of course detract from the disciplinary aspects of mobility and its usefulness for lowering wage costs generally. Perhaps more significantly, it would remove the driving effect on workers who had to struggle to maintain their earnings when put on to new jobs.

The problem was made complicated by management insisting on differentiating their practice according to the particular circumstances of each "type" of move, i.e. whether it was "permanent" or "temporary" (a rather fine distinction where no woman had a permanent job); or whether it was from bonus work to: other bonus work, a "no-value" job or one with a fixed performance. By playing off the different arrangements found in each factory, management had succeeded in stringing out over a long period, negotiations at "convenor level" which were aimed, it would appear, at standardising to the level of "best practices". (16) These negotiations were eventually overtaken by strike action in 1977, but the resulting agreement did little more than establish a set of principles on pay for movement between certain kinds of work. In practice, it largely left managerial discretion intact, regarding payment for, and most importantly, selection of the workers to be moved.

Of course it was not always necessary for management to physically move the workers in order to put them onto other jobs. They could simply move the jobs: the effect was the same.

"I've got a problem with the women that work on what we call the control arm line. They work very hard, they are all women in their 40's, and they're very, very hard working girls - and they've found that over the past fortnight, their wages have been ... have dropped, you know - to the tune of £3, £3.50. Now, this is because, being short of parts, they've had to wait - and they get what they call "waiting time". Also they've been put on another job, which has no value in - and our rate of pay for a "no-value" job, is a 75 performance. Now, these girls are getting a 90 - 95 performance, on their own job so, consequently, when they're moved off, and put on this other job - their money drops. They lose money, they're unhappy - I'm unhappy. So, I had a little word with the superintendent, and with the head of department - and he said he was going to look at the problem. But he hasn't said anything to me yet, you know - he hasn't come back to me today. I had this word with him on Friday. I said, 'I'm looking for something for them, I'm askin' for you to be sympathetic'. (What do you think they'll do?) "I don't know, they are tight - they're tight fisted you know. I don't know, they may make them an allowance - then again he may say, 'We're creating a precedent if we do this; you know, 'have to do it for every one' - which I think they should do. It's no fault of their own is it?". Sally (Sub-Assembly) (17).

In Chapter 7 below, we look in more detail at how the payment system facilitated management "passing on" costs to the workforce. It is clear, however, that since a good third of the jobs were not bonus paying and a significant portion were "no-value" or simply day-rate, there remained, over all, plenty of scope for management to cut wage-costs when necessary, through movement of labour.

#### DISCIPLINE

In the second part of this chapter, the women describe another, highly significant, cost arising from the application of management's strategy: movement of labour was highly stressful from the workers' point of view. Clearly, therefore, in terms of stress and loss of earnings alone, movement of labour could be used punitively by management and made to serve as a direct means of control over the women workers.

Indeed it was used in this way and the threat was ever present. The convenor illustrated its effectiveness well, recalling an occasion when she had seen fit to warn a woman about the likely consequences of her taking time off...

"And so, very quietly, I had a little talk to her. I said, 'well you like your line work, don't you?' and she said 'yes'. I said, 'well, you'll be having the same treatment as Saily and I don't want that to happen, because when you're here, you're an excellent worker'. You may not believe it but that stopped her - the thought of being moved off that line. And she would have been moved, no doubt about it". Pearl (Convenor) (18)

As another steward pointed out: as a punishment it could often be more disruptive than the "crime".

"They had a phase - on the line, if someone came late another was put on their job and they were to be moved off their job for the day. But that didn't make sense, because they were putting an experienced woman off and an inexperienced one on - and given the speed, the work piled up; and everyone was held up". Nora (Final Assembly) (19)

DISMISSAL

As an extension of this punitive aspect, movement of labour could be used to expel "inefficient" or "superfluous" workers by forcing them to leave: Jill, a supervisor had tried to avoid this.

"I put a woman who was an inspector onto motors - .... she couldn't 'ave done it in a month of Sundays. So I 'ad to move one of my own ladies onto that job - and put 'er onto a job which I thought ... She can't even do that! Can't even see the 'holes'. And .. I mean, I could ride the woman - I could really get on 'er back ... Then she'd walk out. But that's what BSR want! You know, so I thought - one day, I can suffer it ..."  
Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly). (20)

But incidents where workers had been forced to leave by management's use of movement of labour were very common indeed:

"Oh many a time, and often for health reasons":

(Can you think of any examples?)

"Oh, about five on the leads section. Because they were on bigger jobs, and they were put upstairs on the leads section. Listen, they put me on you know! And I couldn't see to do the job .....

they were people used to stripping rubber mats - and they came to try and thread a tiny 'cotton' through a little 'bead' because that's what its like ...

They were forced to leave, again - that's through movement of labour." Pip (Sub-Assembly) (21)

Pip had been fortunate, because she had managed to secure a transfer onto another job. This was very rare however - as we will see when we look at more of the women's experiences in Part 2. The labour mobility rule was backed up by a general refusal to consider workers' requests for job transfers. As a result it could be used effectively by management to speed-up 'natural wastage' in particular areas or just generally - whenever this was required. (22)



### Conclusions

Movement of labour was crucial to the intensive utilisation of BSR's female labour force. It was justified by management, on the grounds that (extra) flexibility was required because of the women workers' absenteeism, and also because of changing production requirements. We have noted that this flexibility was also required in order to maintain the flow of work, because management maintained low staffing levels and looked to sustain the same high levels of output, i.e. to reduce costs by intensifying the work. As we have noted, levels of demand for the product varied on a seasonal basis, falling abruptly once the Christmas orders had been completed. Management virtually stopped recruitment from mid-December until early Summer and relied on a fast drop-out rate to diminish the workforce, so that a smaller output would be produced while the pace of work was maintained. In this period, as the workforce became increasingly depleted, the scale of labour mobility was stepped up. Whole sections of workers "over-producing" in some areas, were broken up and redistributed to fill the "gaps" which were disrupting production, elsewhere. As the rate of intensification increased, so did the rate of absenteeism and dropout - increasing the rate of labour mobility and intensification in the labour process still further. It is no accident, therefore, to find that most of the stoppages occurred in late Winter and early Spring.<sup>(23)</sup> And since this also was the period when management were under least pressure from customers, for deliveries (with most of the output going into stock), they were under fewer constraints to modify their production strategies.

The CIR noted how the organisation of the labour process - specifically its fragmentation and the breaking down of job tasks, facilitated the interchangeability of the female labour force. However, as we have noted, there were other features which might have been seen to diminish this. Jobs were not necessarily equivalent, in terms of either pay, hours available or skill requirements. This unevenness facilitated management's use of labour mobility as an important means of labour control.

Another feature of the organisation of the labour process (not noted by the CIR) was its tightly integrated systems of cooperation which were labour intensive in the areas where women workers were employed. With little machinery to regulate the pace of work, the workers' own systems of individual and collective regulation increased in significance. Movement of labour, therefore, provided management with an important means of undermining the development of such job controls by the women.

The impact of movement of labour on both individuals and work groups was disruptive and, as we shall see, it was experienced as stressful. Management's use of the mobility rule (in conjunction with no transfers) enhanced its disciplinary aspects. It thus increased insecurity for the workers with regard to both earnings and employment, and placed more power in management's hands.

PART 2

MOVEMENT OF LABOUR:

"NO JOB IS YOURS".

".... if we do have movement of labour, I mean, they know the rules - the rules are clearly laid down - full movement of labour. Now we use these humanely, I'm confident".  
Barry White (Factory Manager) (24).

"Well, you're just a clock number you know. You're moved, you're not even thanked, they just tell you they've got another job for you and that's it. They don't consider anything, like how long you've been here - no I think you're just another clock number ...

... they don't look at a person and take into consideration whether a person can do a job - whether they're too old or .. I don't think they look at that. You're just another number, and they want someone on a job, and that's it".  
Janet (Sub-Assembly) (25).

In view of what has already been said about the importance of movement of labour to management, particularly as a means towards intensifying labour utilisation and increasing control over the workforce, it clearly constituted a central problem from the workers' point of view. What kind of impact did the practice of mobility have on that section of the labour force most subjected to it - the women workers? The rest of this chapter is concerned with examining such implications in respect of two major areas. These are linked together, but will be considered separately. First, the problem of employment (and earnings) security; and secondly the question of exploitation within the labour process itself. Job controls are related to both of these in a complex way; since a certain amount of control or stability is necessary in relation to either one, in order to achieve it in the other.

For example, an increase in the rate of exploitation which raises productivity, can lead to a decrease in the amount of employment available - either altogether or in particular areas. On the other hand, a high(er) degree of competition among workers in the labour market and the labour process, serves generally to inhibit the effectiveness of collective organisation and control over managerial practices such as speed-up and intensification. For a number of reasons this situation is characteristic of most women workers, whose restricted access to training and confinement to a narrow range of jobs together with restricted physical mobility increases their dependence on, and competition within, local labour markets. Whereupon the unspecialised nature of the work available tends to increase its accessibility to large numbers of similarly placed workers. (26)

While bearing this context in mind, our purpose here is to focus narrowly: to look more closely at the labour process itself - at the impact of managerial strategies (here, movement of labour) on the controls which the women at BSR exercised over their work in an immediate sense. Also to examine the implications both of, and for, employment (in)security within the firm.

Every woman interviewed for this study mentioned movement of labour as one of their biggest problems. A question such as - if you had the chance to move to another job here, what would you do? - was singularly inappropriate at BSR.

"I don't know, they don't give you that chance (laughs), It's a silly question here! Yes, it definitely is here! They don't ask you, they tell you here. And you can go on fighting - it don't make no difference if they say they've got to go, they've got to go and that's it!"  
Nora (Final Assembly) (27)

The position of the women was spelt out by the convenor:

"Now when a person is enrolled into BSR, you know that you have no job. No job is yours. There are many more people in the factory that have got movement of labour than what have got their own, set job. There are very few people - even the moulding machines are moved around". Pearl (Convenor) (28)

The principle applied to all hourly paid women workers who were recruited as production operatives. Male workers were taken on for specific jobs or for work in specific areas. The only women so recruited might be found in, for example, the press shop, where the necessary training, skills or experience had to be acquired outside the firm. But even these workers could be given different work to do if occasion required.

To the extent that these workers might be considered to have relatively well demarcated jobs (referred to as "permanent") compared to everyone else, their position was envied.

"And they go on about these newcomers you know, as they like, go on to different jobs - and why should they? But I mean, they've come as press operators, and they'm entitled to go on to the jobs, I think meself. But they're always complaining about the new people going straight onto the presses. But they've come as press workers". Sarah (Press Shop) (29).

Why was the issue of "a permanent job" so important to the workers concerned?

Movement of labour and job security: what happened to the "school mothers"?

"By gently and carefully manoeuvring the operators around ..." (30)

A brief examination of movement of labour applied by management to effect their policies with regard to the deployment of full-time and part-time workers, can be used to illustrate some of the problems to begin with - providing, as it does, a more coherent context within which its general impact on the workforce may be viewed.

As discussed earlier, managers were constantly re-arranging the way work was distributed among workers employed for different hours in order to "optimise" their mix of part-time and full-time labour. Apart from facilitating recruitment, the variety of employment hours was clearly a great boon in certain respects; for if total production - that is, labour hours were being cut in some sections (meaning workers were to be moved off those jobs) the size of the cut could be adjusted. If only a few hours less were required, a part-time worker on afternoons might be moved, reducing the daily labour-hours employed in that section by 3½. A morning worker moved would reduce daily production or labour hours there by 4½ and a "school mother" by 5½. On the other hand, more output might be required from a section, in which case part-time workers could be brought in to provide the appropriate number of additional hours. Alternatively full-time workers might be put on, to replace part-timers already there (in this case, bringing the added advantage of greater "administrative" convenience). The other side of this useful flexibility from management's point of view, was stress and insecurity for the worker. The following accounts refer to the impact of movement of labour on part-time workers who were being particularly subjected to mobility at the time of the study.

"Movement of labour is a problem. People don't like being moved around. First they move part-timers then full-timers - now they've decided to have all full-timers, so they push the part-timers around.."  
Janet (Sub-Assembly) (31)

It was one group of part-time workers especially who were being "rationalised" at this particular time - the 9.30 - 3.30 workers on what was called the "school mothers'" shift. This was described by management as "an animal all by itself", because two

part-timers on the other shifts - morning (4½ hourly) workers and afternoon (3½ hourly) workers, or the four-hourly shift workers - together made up a "full-time equivalent"<sup>(32)</sup>. It was easier to co-ordinate the production from those workers with full-timers because the same hours were being covered. The 9.30 - 3.30 workers posed more problems in this respect and so they tended to be grouped altogether, in particular areas. It was these areas which were being "rationalised" in order to finally comprise one main part of the sub-assembly upstairs and two final assembly lines downstairs. This involved considerable movement within and between production areas.

"Upstairs they are moving 9.30 - 3.30 workers off. They haven't started any new workers on this shift for 2 years or so. They fill the 2 lines downstairs from upstairs".

(Are they phasing this shift out?)

"He says not. But they're taking them off upstairs or replacing them with full-time workers".  
Nora (Final Assembly) (33).

Janet was facing the problem of movement upstairs:

"At present I'm thinking about what to do about them moving the part-timers onto my section. I should like to be able to stop them from moving them there, but you just can't, you know. They're gradually moving part-timers off the other sections and they're now all on mine - and there's only two lines downstairs. I think they'll gradually get rid of them all - make them leave or go full-time - when vacancies come up now downstairs, they are moved off my section and sent down there.."  
Janet (Sub-Assembly) (34)

As Nora on the final assembly line downstairs explained - there was a difference, when it came to "interchangeability" in the theory and the practice.

"It creates problems because - we know they are 'experienced BSR women', as management put it. But they're experienced on a different job.

And if I went onto their job, I'd be exactly the same, and of course a lot of these women they panic - when they come on the line they panic ..." Nora (Final Assembly) (35).

From the point of view of the women workers on the 9.30 - 3.30 shift (as it did for all of the women in fact), movement of labour posed a very real threat.

(Movement of labour?)

"Yes, get that ... they're every day problems, those are . They move women to do jobs that they can't do. No WAY can they do it, you know. (Has that happened recently?) Yes, on the leads section. They moved a couple of my members onto the leads section, because they were 9.30 women you see. And then they moved them from the leads section onto the cartridge section. I think they can almost do that - you know, the job now. But movement of labour, we have trouble every day"

"Sometimes there are cases, say where a woman is physically UNABLE to do a job, you know. Such as a woman - they put her on the cartridge section, and she had this thyroid problem, and it affected her eyes, and her eyes were literally ... you know they'd been operated on, and they were literally stitched together - the one eye was literally stitched, and the other one was open, and she wore dark glasses, and ... she was in a terrible state! And no WAY could she do cartridges, but they expected her to sit there and do it, you know. (Why on earth did they move her?) Because she was a 9.30 worker, I s'pose. And I just saw red! And I went across and fetched all her stuff off her you know - all the stuff away from her. I said 'You can't see it ... you can't do it!' So they fetched her off the job, and put her on a job with a little press - that she CAN do, and now her eyes are much better - but they haven't put her back on". Sally (Sub-Assembly) (36).  
(my emphasis in lower case, otherwise emphasis in original)

Neither was long service a protection:

"They moved some people out of the department and onto the main lines and they were middle-aged women, you know, and they put up a struggle but they still had to go in the end .. but they've left. One's left that's done 15 years service. She was in that department 15 years part-time afternoons. They put her on the main line but she's left. Mind you she



was in her late 50's, say she was about 55.  
Well I mean, it was a shame for that age to  
put her on a job which, you know, - the lines".  
Carol (Moulding Shop) (37).

It would appear that most of the 9.30 - 3.30 women who were moved, gave up their jobs altogether. Should this be seen as a sign of their "low commitment to employment" ? As in the example above, it is probable that many were long service workers, because employment at these hours was hard to come by. Some of the reasons why mobility was difficult to cope with in general are examined in the following sections.

#### In security of employment and earnings

"Of course, that's naturally resistance to change - whether its temporary or permanent. Look! Its not a big problem. The shop stewards are obviously going to say there's a resistance to change, they're bound to, because it affects them and it affects their members. But generally it's accepted, and it works very, very well. We don't normally have much trouble with it at all". Barry White (Factory Manager) (38).

One thing which the above case study illustrates clearly is the way movement of labour could constitute a permanent threat to the women workers' security of employment within the company. While all the jobs might have been considered interchangeable (because "unskilled") in theory, in practice they required different attributes and aptitudes - both natural and learned, on the part of the worker. For example, some of the work on small electrical components demanded deftness and a degree of consistent close attention akin to needlework, as well as good eyesight. Other jobs were physically demanding, lifting, fetching and carrying, standing all day - which required robustness and energy. And as pointed out above, if no job was intrinsically difficult, all were in terms of the speed at which they had to be done. It was always, therefore, within the realms of

possibility that a worker could be put on to a job which she could not do, and as a consequence be forced to leave her employment. (39)

"There is a lady moved over from my section, and put over onto the far end of the room. She was moved from a little toggle-press thing, to working with fine leads, fine wires - but ... the lady had got arthritis in her hands, and she couldn't handle it, you know. And ... she was on the job about a month, and she used to sit crying, but eventually we got her moved - because there was no way that she could do the job! So I said, 'Well, just sit there then - do nothing! Till they finally realise that you can't do the job'."

Sally (Sub-Assembly) (40)

"I've got one now, who was transferred from downstairs - she can't see well and suffers from very bad nerves - she was put on leads!

"They're forcing a lot of them to leave - and this is what happens at BSR".

Pip (Sub-assembly) (41)

Nor did having your own set job (42) necessarily afford protection:

"One of the new ones on the job at the moment - she's asked the superintendent to take her off, she doesn't like it. His reply was 'she came as a press operator, so press operator she's going to be'. But this machine, it does frighten a lot of people and I do wish as I could get something done for this girl; because it's an automatic one, it goes by light - you don't press a button or anything, it goes by light, and she's frightened. She's petrified of this machine, and I do really wish that I could get something done for her.."

Sarah (Press Shop) (43).

We have noted in Part I of this chapter how labour mobility afforded management a flexibility in regard to the workforce which was essential to their practices of intensive utilisation and labour control. In respect of the latter, we have seen that the punitive aspects of movement of labour could be used strategically; serving both as an ever-present threat, and also as a means of speeding up "natural wastage" and expelling unwanted workers.

A major consequence of this was that it engendered for the women workers, a pervasive insecurity, the sense of which was almost tangible in the factories. As Pip described it, it was an 'atmosphere.'

(What were your first feelings about working here?)

"The pettyness really. I mean, some of the women, if you were doing a job, they'd ... they'd got the feeling you were taking the job off them. That's the feeling I had here.

(Why was that?)

I don't know, but that is an atmosphere here. If you're doing another person's - say a person's been away, and they put you on that job for a short time - they'll tell you its only for a short time, until she comes back - you feel guilty, you've got that guilty feeling you're doing somebody else's job. That's the only thing I can put it down to.

Pip was, herself, off work due to ill-health (heart-trouble) at the time.

(While you are away do you feel concerned about getting your job back?)

"Well, I do at the moment, because I mean, this is one of the things ... you know, I keep ... I keep thinking, 'Oh, I hope I've got my job - I've still got my job, because I ... you see, this is the job I've been on - I've never been on a job so long as this one - I've been on this job 12 months. And its the only job I've been on for that long". Pip (Sub-Assembly) (44)

This fundamental insecurity in relation to their employment had, as might be expected, important implications for the development of job controls in the areas of production where the women workers were located. We go on to examine this further in the final section. But first we look at the threat labour mobility posed in relation to the women's pay.

# PAY

Movement of labour was an important source of earnings insecurity for the women workers. This was because different jobs carried differing rates of pay and also because earnings on bonus work depended upon the acquisition of sufficient speed:

"It's a problem if you're not allowed to stay on a job long - you can't get enough speed-up to earn the money". Janet (Sub-Assembly) (45)

The worst kind of move, from an earnings point of view, was on to "no value" jobs. These were paid at a minimum rate and carried no bonus, so that even as speed and output increased with practice, no extra money could be earned. As Janet put it:

"You finally end up with less, 'cos you've no chance of getting any more". Janet (Sub-Assembly) (46)

"Lady of the line - I don't think she was one of my members, but she came to me because there wasn't anyone else about. And she'd been moved off her job onto a no-value job, and her wages had gone down - so she came and asked if we could help". Jenny (Final Assembly) (47)

The women had been trying to establish an acceptable procedure to protect their earnings if they were moved, but the agreement only referred to "permanent" moves and most were designated "temporary" anyway. In any case, average earnings would only be paid if management considered that "suitable efforts were being made". In other words, the decisions were arbitrary and to that extent, always remained to be negotiated:

"Now, sometimes the company's idea of effort and my idea of effort, you know - differs. I think they've made a good effort, the company say, 'We don't think so - so we are paying them day money'. But sometimes, you know - I had 2 cases yesterday, as a matter of fact - and I got a 75 performance for 2 members, and I got a 70 for one. But they were going to pay them 66 you know. And they were doing jobs alien to them, you know what I mean?" Sally (Sub-Assembly) (48).

The women were forced under mobility rules, to move or to leave, and to protect their earnings, had to be prepared to haggle as well. They were always liable to lose money however - it was just a question of how much.

"The one was the same as the job that she always does. The other 2 ... er, they told me they were satisfied. I was a bit upset about the one particularly, because she gets a 99 performance, and they boosted it up from 66 to 75, you know. And she said, 'Don't bother, you know, I'm happy'. So, you can't really force their arm up their back, can you? And the other one, she normally got a 75 and they gave her a 66 - and then they took the paper back, .... I told her to, you know, ask for more, and he came back with a 70. And she came to me, she said 'I'm satisfied' - well, I could have gone up, p'raps, and got 75 for her". Sally (Sub-Assembly) (49).

We appear to have here some clear illustrations of women workers' fabled unwillingness to stand up to management and negotiate their pay. Can we, perhaps, identify an outbreak of 'economic fatalism' similar to that which was uncovered by the government's investigators?

"There were many instances where factors completely beyond the operators' control reduced their earnings, and in nearly every case a form of economic fatalism prevented them from complaining". NBPI (1968) p.19

In approaching this question, we would want to assess the basis from which the workers are entering into a bargaining relationship with management. What bargaining resources do they have at their disposal? We have already noted that the strength of the women workers position at BSR was, in general, considerably undermined by the high degree of insecurity engendered by management's use of labour mobility. As we will now go on to see, their bargaining resources were also reduced directly by the impact of movement of labour on the development of both individual and collective job controls.

#### JOB CONTROL

It is clear that management's utilisation of movement of labour, had a significant impact on the women workers' job security. The consequences of this had important ramifications for their position in the labour process itself, and this again, movement of labour affected directly.

We have already seen how management used movement of labour to effect speed-up and labour intensification. As we have seen with doubling-up, the movement of workers and alteration of job content were two sides of the same coin. Speed-up also, was facilitated by moving workers from one job to another so that it was difficult to keep a track of what the count had been. In the case of the moulding machines, both the jobs and the workers were switched about in this way.

"If they want to put the count up or anything like that, they take the tool out of the machine, and put you another tool in - a different job. And then that tool will go to the tool room to be cleaned or something, and then, when it comes out again, it goes on to another machine, and they slam another count on it you see....(It happened to her) ... after a month, they took the job off the machine and moved it somewhere else, and this is what they do. If they want to put the count up, they take it off one machine take it back into the toolroom and when it comes out, put it back onto another machine, so nobody's got a check on what the counts are ...." Madge (Moulding Shop) (50)

Movement of labour was effective for management's purposes to the extent that it undermined the workers' potential for resistance to demands for increased effort, by breaking job continuity and fragmenting the knowledge they required in order to exert control over the work. But continuity and knowledge are not the only elements to job control, and this section goes on to examine the crucial question of the work group and the impact of labour mobility on the workers' collective controls which were continuously developed within the labour process.

The division of labour/fragmentation of work tasks, the different patterns of co-operation and the "incentive" aspects of the payment system, were all designed so as to subordinate the workers' control over their activities and expenditure of effort to management's aims. But each of these, while breaking down one potential barrier to this goal, served to recreate another. Thus, the jobs were "de-skilled", but given the nature of the work and the speed at which it had to be executed, still required a significant degree of technical coordination. A level of competence had still to be acquired, together with a degree of habituation which permitted the relaxation necessary for workers to produce consistently at a high rate. More importantly, cohesive work groups were continuously created in this labour process, either because the women were required to operate as closely coordinated work teams; or because, although on individual jobs, they were placed in close proximity to each other in the relatively confined factory space. This labour process therefore, characterised, as it was by a high degree of interdependent operations, also required a level of social coordination, in addition to the technical co-ordination mentioned above. Furthermore, operators on bonus work, for example, were permitted some leeway in deciding their levels of output, (albeit within narrow limits and above a set minimum). And this again, required a high degree of mutual regulation and organisation which is evident in Pearl's description of work on sub-plates. A team of 17 operators regulated production to maintain an earnings/output target despite constantly changing conditions and contingencies:

"If you had achieved 66 and were trying to get an 80 you'd need to do 450 for this. If you're used to the job you'd get this easily - unless parts were bad or there was a shortage. This would give you waiting time. So, in this hour, with 10 mins waiting you'd only have got a 76 performance. You'd look and see 325 booked instead of 450, and you'd book 325 and waiting time 10 mins. But then you'd got 452 and know an 80 was 450 an hour, you'd

put those 2 aside for your next hour. You try to set a target each hour and work to that. But it's very hard to do. So many things can go wrong to upset your calculations.  
Pearl (Convenor and Sub-Assembly) (51)

It is clear that the successful operation of management's production policy required particularly of the workers in "teams" a high degree of cohesion, mutual coordination, regulation and organisation, simply in order to put production into effect, i.e. to maintain the flow of work. However, we have also noted that the various systems of cooperation were designed to maximise the immediate pressures of inter-dependency within the labour process for each operator in order to minimise the "space" within which they could exert choice and control over their effort. Regulation of work effort, therefore, clearly had also to include regulation of the pressure built in to, and mediated by, the cooperative relationship itself. Since there were a variety of different systems of cooperation in the labour process, each engendered different kinds of pressure and called for different means in order to control its impact on the part of the workers involved. So we return, briefly, to look at the different patterns of cooperation in the labour process - at the way these structured work relations on the one hand, and problems of work regulation on the other - before returning to examine the impact of labour mobility on workers' job controls.

The pressure of dependency, increased by its degree of immediacy, was greatest in those sequential tasks where the performance of one was directly dependent on that preceding it, and everyone's actions were thus initiated from sources external to themselves. Direct social pressure was greatest where work was passed from hand to hand. And it required, on the part of these workgroups - as it did, in some



sense, of them all - collective efforts to ameliorate its impact on every individual concerned. This meant, in effect, that in order to regulate her own effort, each worker had also to regulate the efforts of others and was therefore party to the collective regulation of the immediate work group (the boundaries of its effects might be wider than this however, depending on the circumstances and environment of each section).

As a means of overcoming this kind of regulation managements have tended to find machine-pacing of sequential tasks more effective than inter-personal social pressure alone. But only two areas were organised in this way at BSR, and they both operated slightly differently. The continuous paint and plating lines connecting each automated process, set the pace for the operatives attending it, who adjusted their work-rate to the line rather than directly to each other. Any alteration in the line-speed depended on the intervention of setters; so to some extent, the line mediated the pressure the women might put on each other. On the final assembly line, however, the work itself was done off-line, and all the tasks were different. The unit was removed by the operative each time, then put onto the line again, to be conveyed to the next station. The pace of the work depended to some extent on the speed of the belt, but it depended as much on the speed of the individual operatives. A quick worker at the top of the line set the pace for those below. A slow person in the middle caused a bottleneck and slowed it down, and two people clearing a bottleneck doubled the pace again for those below them. This combination of machine and worker pacing seemed to make linework especially stressful. One of the reasons for this was the fact that the speed and also fluctuations in the rhythm of the work

lay beyond the control of each individual herself. While this was the case for all linked-sequence tasks, final assembly on the main lines was subject to more fluctuations in pace and rhythm than work elsewhere, and this made it, as was commonly agreed, one of the most frustrating and difficult areas of work in the firm.

Management's production policy therefore engendered the need for, as well as the means of workers developing controls to stabilize their work effort. And insofar as tasks were organised on a collective basis (e.g. teams working on linked sequence operations), workers' job regulation necessarily assumed a collective character. It is clear that the more stable the membership of the work group, the more effectively these controls could be exercised to restrain the pace and intensity of work. Movement of labour could be used by management to undermine work group stability. But the results were contradictory from management's point of view since mutual coordination and regulation were as much a requirement of workers achieving high output in this system of production, as it was a means of their restricting it. Similarly, from the point of view of the workers, the rules concerning labour mobility which officially denied them "their own job", contradicted the obvious fact that experience and habituation were also necessary to achieve the required output;

"Some women have been on a particular job 5,6,7 years. They look on it as their particular job. But it's not - They're told they're a team ... But they know, those used to the jobs get quicker". Nora (Final Assembly) (52)

What was the impact of labour mobility on the women's efforts to regulate the pace and intensity of their work? In the example presented below, which details the consequences of moving workers engaged in team-assembly, it is clear that there are three aspects to consider: the impact on the individual who is moved, the impact

on the group which is left, and the impact on the group which is joined, i.e. on "residents" who are given newcomers to work with.

#### BREAKING DOWN THE LINE

All of these are illustrated in this account of the "breaking down of the lines" at Old Hill. This procedure was used by management in periods when labour (and output) was being cut back to the extent that there were not enough workers to run all the lines. Then a line would be "broken down" - half of the workers would be taken off and dispersed to fill spaces on other lines - to work among people and on jobs they were not necessarily accustomed to. First we look at the impact on those workers who were left on the line:

they were doubled-up on their jobs:

"Unless you work on the lines, you can't really explain it you know, because there's - oh I don't know how many different jobs, say there's ... actually there should be 68 girls to run the line and so many floats - I think its 72 or 75 to run one line correctly. But, you've got your good jobs - you've got simple jobs ... well, the girl on the front job has got nothing at all extra to do, when you're broke down, only put a little bit of grease on. The girl on the next job has nothing at all to do extra, unless they're on springs and she automatically puts a spring on - which is nothing. Now, the one on the next job, she's got 2 jobs to do, and the one on the next job she's got 2 to do. Its a double job with only 1 girl on - the other girl is took off and you see, there's more work for some than others. You see, you've got a lot of girls with a lot of extra work to do, on 1/2 a line, and a lot of girls that can sit and twiddle their thumbs. So, therefore, these girls that are working - some are working damned hard and some are just getting the same money and doing nothing extra." Eunice (Final Assembly) (53).

Secondly, there is the impact on the person transferred to a different job on another line to be considered:

"They could put you on a job that you hadn't been on before, and if you couldn't keep up - I mean you can imagine the aggro you can get off certain parties, because they've got no patience with you, you know - if you can't do your job that's it ... and they can't do those jobs you know. But they've still got to go and try and do them - and they come back and they've

got blisters on their fingers - when they come back on to their own lines. And actually, I was on a job before the holiday and I got a blister as big as a ½ pence on my hand from 1 day's work - from doing a job that I wasn't used to doing and not holding the tool properly. You're just put on it and they say 'Oh, that's just an easy job you can do that.' But they don't tell you how to hold the tools - they do nothing. And if you're told - I was told after I'd been on it 2 hours, after I'd got the blister, what to do." Ethel (Final Assembly) (54)

Finally, there is the impact on the "residents" and the problematic relationship between themselves and the newcomer.

"You've got test girls. Well, they're only used to test work. If there's no test job for them, then they put them on the assembly line - which is another thing that causes problems. Well they don't know the job. It's alright if you know a job, but if you're put on a job and they say 'Oh do your best ... But if you're on a double job ... when I say a double job - you've got the track - the first job is a single job down to the fourth. Now the fourth job, there has to be 2 girls on that job. So therefore when you go onto another line ... if there's already a girl on that job on the line - as can do the job, and then there's a test-float or someone as can't and they say 'do your best' - that other girl's carrying that one. And that's what it is, only <sup>one</sup> thing, but I mean, it's what causes a lot of problems, with the breaking down of the lines. And the girls that come on the jobs, they think, well, they aren't pulling their weight. I mean, you'd feel it. If you're a girl - conscious of your job - which there is some. I'm not saying all of them, but there is some and they think 'Oh, it isn't fair, I'm making her do all the work - which you are if you aren't pulling your weight. It's only little niggly things, but they're niggly things that cause conflict amongst the girls". Eunice (Final Assembly) (55)

### Conclusions

Workers develop and utilise job controls in order both to facilitate the execution of their work and also to regulate the expenditure of effort entailed. To the extent that such regulation is defensive and takes protective forms, these will constitute resistance to demands for increased expenditure of effort; whether these derive from the employer or other workers. We would maintain that it was the diminution of job control in general that constituted the most significant impact of movement of labour on the women workers at BSR. But we need to specify some of the elements of individual and collective regulation more closely, in order to assess what kind of impact management's use of mobility might have on job controls.

"I mean - you lose friends, and you lose touch. You don't know how much you have to do. Some jobs are left-handed. Some people can't sit down for long periods - they get stiff - some can't adjust themselves to it at all".  
Janet (Sub-Assembly) (56)

The impact of job transfer on the person who was moved, is itemised here in terms of the following: loss of social group, that is known relationships; loss of knowledge about the job; and loss of "work adjustment" i.e. habituation and acquired skills. Whether in individual or teamwork, these three elements - the social group, job knowledge and job habituation/skills, together made up the basic components of work regulation. The most significant impact, therefore, of job transfer on the person who was moved was disruption in relation to all three. The consequence was, therefore, (an albeit, temporary) loss of individual job control.

There is a further consequence to be considered where team work is concerned however, and that is the impact of movement of labour

on the work group. We have noted two aspects to this; one concerned the removal of workers altogether which led to a heavier workload for some of the remainder, and the other concerned the substitution of "new" workers, which also tended to increase the work load of original team members. But the extra work and pressure entailed was not distributed or borne evenly with n the group - it always fell far more heavily on some workers, rather than others. Because of the loss of balance and coordination which could result from this disruption of rhythm and work-flow plus the fact that personal conflict and frustration were all the more readily engendered; it is clear that to a significant extent also, the impact of job transfer on the remaining group resulted in some loss of collective job control.

The account of "breaking down the lines" expresses the exposure of workers to group pressure, experienced as a driving force behind the high pace. It was this that chiefly distinguished individual and teamwork jobs and set the different parameters of job control. (Although individual jobs were not necessarily free of this pressure which appeared to derive, in an immediate sense, from other workers).

(When you first started here, what was the hardest thing you found to get used to?)

"The pace. The pace of work. I was on a line, and it was very fast - very fast working you know, this I found". (How long did it take you to get used to it?) "Oh, I don't think you ever do ... and the older you get, the worse it gets". (Is it faster now than it used to be?). "Well, of course my pace has slowed down because I'm working individually - for myself ... on a job that I don't need to keep up with the girl next to me. But, I think it's got faster ... the demand is greater - they demand more of you." Sally (Sub-Assembly) (57).

In this section we have identified three major areas of consequence to the women workers arising from management's use of labour mobility. Movement of labour destroyed job continuity, knowledge and expertise, making speed up and work intensification harder to resist. Movement of labour broke up work groups and teams. As a result it destroyed, in the short-term, the coordination and mutual regulation necessary for smooth production, on a cooperative basis. And at the same time it undermined protective strategies which were also continuously developed, both individually and collectively, which served to shield workers from pressure and stress engendered in the labour process.

As we noted with the position of the new recruit, there is, in the workers' accounts of the experience of labour mobility (eg. breaking down the lines), a description of work in this labour process in the (initial) absence of such protections. Since the immediate impact of movement of labour is to disrupt job knowledge and habituation, together with whatever interpersonal regulatory mechanisms are established in systems of social relationships, these elements can be identified as forming the basis of protections against stress and driving and therefore, of job control.

"Nobody likes to be moved. Everybody likes to work in their own set like... If people think they're going to be moved they often won't come in".  
Ethel (Final Assembly) (58).

Finally, we have argued that the diminution of job controls has implications for workers' bargaining relationship with management, because it directly reduces the bargaining resources available to individuals, groups or whole sections of the workforce. Other aspects of this question in relation to the women workers are pursued in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5

MOVEMENT OF LABOUR

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) But this interchangeability was limited, see Part II of this chapter.
- (2) See Chapter 10 and clause 25 of the 'Blue Book' Agreement in Appendix 1.
- (3) He continues "And as it happens - breakdown packing is dead. Now break-down packing is where we send the record changer out in component form. Now that is ... dropped right off - 12,000 a week gone down to 1,000 a week. So that labour has to be reallocated to other duties. So, you have a problem - moving it round. Do you move it around permanently, or do you move it around temporarily. So, in that case - you have 2 sets of circumstances to work to".  
Ref 12/S1: 17-38.
- (4) See below, pp. 126 - 144
- (5) Ref 41/S4: 950-959
- (6) Ref 20/S2: 212-218
- (7) (Selection of supervision: in early days picked on merit. Foreman asked senior supervisor on line to recommend.)

"Now I was chosen exactly the same, you pick on merit, and on 'ow versatile they are and 'ow quick they pick up a job. But now you've got a manager, Mr White, interviewing 'em; and he interviews 'em for a 'Yes or no sir! you know, Those who're gonna do 'is biddin'. And they're not as supervisors, when they put the coat on, all they think - they are glorified labourers. They think that's their job - its to fetch and carry. In actual fact, its spoilin' the supervisors' reputation, because by then you've got the girls nigglin': "Oh she doesn't know as much as me, all she's used to is fetchin' and carryin'." Because the poor girl 'asn't 'ad the opportunity! you know.

These supervisors <sup>are</sup> browbeaten by management into doing this as part of their job, - to keep the lines going. They're not able to look after the girls properly, so you get a bit of unrest against the supervision". Jill (Supervisor-Final Assembly)  
Ref 8/S1: 820-870.

- (8) Ref 21(a)/S3: 020
- (9) Ref 7/S1: 580 -
- (10) Ref 21(b)/S3: 30
- (11) Ref 9/S1: 906-950
- (12) Ref 4/
- (13) Thus workers put each other under pressure to speed up.
- (14) Ref 20/S1: 876-898



- (15) Ref 31/S3: 528-551
- (16) The only circumstance where the payment of average earnings had been established by custom and practice in some areas, was for a move designated "permanent", onto bonus work, and payment was for four weeks although probably with the usual proviso of: "subject to suitable effort being made".
- (17) Ref 20/S2: 619-687
- (18) Ref 44/S6: 931-941
- (19) Ref 9/S1: 720-743
- (20) Ref 28(b)/S3: 880-
- (21) Ref 32/Ss: 599-610
- (22) See above on moving part-time workers from particular areas in order to replace them by full-timers. With more workers on particular shifts than the number of jobs (now) being made available for these hours, management calculated that those moved would be forced to work full-time or leave.
- (23) See Chapter 14.
- (24) Ref 2/S1: 38-47
- (25) Reg 5/S1: 586-627
- (26) Arguing against these writers who identify such a lack of effectiveness and attribute it to women workers' attitudes, Kate Purcell draws attention to " .... the lack of industrial bargaining power of the majority of women, deriving from their own position in the labour market and the market position of the industries in which they are concentrated.  
  
Unskilled labour is rarely a scarce resource and, as such, has little industrial muscle." Purcell (1979) p.125
- (27) Ref 5/S1: 402-408
- (28) Ref 45
- (29) Ref 18-19/S2: 298-317
- (30) Factory Manager quoted above p.96
- (31) Ref 9/S2: 300-310
- (32) See footnote p. 113 - 114
- (33) 10/S1: 839-880
- (34) 15/S2: 857-882
- (35) Ref 10/S1: 850-875  
Nora recalled a previous occasion when workers had been moved downstairs and put on her line. Workers being moved now, could not expect a similar reprieve.

- (35) cont'd. "2 years ago they moved 9.30 - 3.30 workers from upstairs when we weren't short. We had a lot of trouble a couple of years ago with unnecessary movement - moving them down, then putting someone else on their job. Well, they moved 2 down who'd been told that their work was not wanted anymore, and 1hr later they put others on it! The next morning they went upstairs and found women on their jobs ... (the women complained ...) The women were taken back upstairs. The excuse was, that it was an emergency order that had come in ...."  
Ref 18/S2: 605-650.
- (36) Ref 23/S2: 863-931
- (37) Ref 17/18
- (38) Ref 2/S1: 38 - 47
- (39) The movement of labour rule forbade a worker to refuse to move on pain on dismissal and job transfers requested by workers were not permitted except on rare occasions.
- (40) Ref 21/S2: 751-771
- (41) Ref 20/S2: 760 - 794
- (42) This might be possible for a press operator
- (43) Ref 16/S2: 120-140
- (44) Ref 3/S1: 203 - 231
- (45) Ref 3/S1: 345-350
- (46) Ref 11/S2: 516-520
- (47) Ref 26/S2: 395-400
- (48) Ref 24/S3: 40-58
- (49) Ref 27/S3: 214-236
- (50) Ref 19/S21, 532-561
- (51) Ref 12,13/S3: 000-044
- (52) Ref 17/S2: 598-610
- (53) Ref OH 19-20/T3S1: 10-65
- (54) Ref OH9/T251: 144-160 and OH 19-20/T351: 10-63
- (55) Ref OH 19-20/T351/10-65
- (56) Ref 14/S2: 750-760
- (57) Ref 4/S1: 246-270
- (58) Ref OH9, 14/T2S1 110,690.

CHAPTER 6 DISCIPLINE AND THE CONTROL OF LABOUR

In this chapter we look at BSR management's disciplinary practice in respect of the women workers. Material which might provide some basis for comparison with other workplaces is not available, but to all appearances, the disciplinary load in these factories was high overall - and especially so for the women, compared with the men. <sup>(1)</sup> A question underlying our discussion therefore, is to explain this.

Capitalist employers' power in the workplace is founded on their control over access to the means of subsistence. Their ultimate sanction is the deprivation of a workers' livelihood. The concept of "labour discipline", therefore, expresses the fact that all waged work carried out as a response to economic needs is, to some extent, coerced. This is so though the degree of dependency - on employment in general, and on specific jobs in particular - may vary between workers and change for individuals or groups over time. (Nor does this fact of coercion disappear when workers find or make their labour more congenial). Looking at the aspect of economic dependency alone, it is clear, that from this common basis of coercion, a variety of material and social conditions may differentiate wage workers in relation to their employment, i.e. in terms of the nature and degree of their "commitment", at any one time. Thus employers and their managers are presented with control problems of a different nature and degree according to who is employed, when, where and how.

"I mean, I can remember many years ago, when the main lines were running say 95-100 performances. And the sub-assembly were on 125 performances. Because they were all married women, who came solely for one purpose only, to earn money. And they earned money! And, now you tend to have the younger girls on the lines - and coming back to an earlier question, I don't think as they get older, they get any more mature, I think they still ... The younger generation coming in, live their life as they started it. In other words, they don't ... The older women, the old chain makers - they were the GRAFTERS of the Black-Country. They came in, and they grafted, and they worked, and they wanted money - they didn't come in for anything else, they just wanted money. Now, the younger girls today, don't seem to have that desire. Their wages are higher anyway, therefore, a lot of them just don't know ... the youngsters, the teenagers - certainly just don't know what to do with their money. I mean they literally give their mother £6 per week, and take home £50 per week, and spend it on anything they want. They're just not interested, money's of no importance whatsoever to them. They can afford to take the day off when they want to - again we're coming back to our old problem of absenteeism."

Barry White (Factory Manager) (2)

In this discussion, variations in material and social conditions arising from age, marital status, generation and historical period, are all mentioned as having significance from the point of view of management control.

But these control problems do not simply derive from the labour force alone. They arise in the context of other control needs which have their sources elsewhere. We have seen, in the first place, how strong competition and market constraints, in terms of fluctuating demand and upward-price inflexibility, gave rise to pressures for close managerial control over production, which the organisation of the labour process, to some extent, facilitated. Yet this itself, also posed particular control problems, demanding "external" regulation to a high degree.

The exercise of disciplinary power by management over the labour force must, therefore, be seen as an integral aspect of overall control strategy, and viewed in the wider context of their production policy as a whole. It will vary, for instance, according to how the product market, the organisation of the labour process, payment system and the nature of the labour force fit together. For example, widespread use of machine pacing or automatic work-monitoring in the factory may change the nature and content of management disciplining, as may "incentive" as averse to "measured" work payment systems. Management at BSR operated a labour intensive, closely integrated production process which was broken down to a high degree, and a payment system, characterised by a low "incentive" element and linked to fairly inflexible - because maximum (from the workers' point of view) - output requirements. (3) The employment of women workers on the grounds of their cheapness, availability for the type of work and flexibility, fitted in with the overall production policy aimed at controlling costs and output. But the employment of women also gave rise to the need for managerial controls in particular respects:

"I mean, each has got their own advantages and disadvantages. The older women come, they plod along at a good steady pace with a very good sense of responsibility - but they tend to have more time off because of their families. The younger ones, they're damn good workers when they're here, and they put their minds to it - its just a matter of motivating them and getting their minds to it."  
Barry White (Factory Manager) (4)

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This production process, labour intensive, highly fragmented yet tightly integrated, had as its motor-force a generally insufficient number of workers who, for the most part, were subject

to competing commitments outside the factory. Or, for other reasons, which must include the production process itself, low commitment to their jobs. In these circumstances management chose direct labour disciplining as their main control strategy. This it must be assumed, was considered cheaper and more effective than more "positive" alternatives (such as employing sufficient workers). But there were also "costs" attached in the sense that, on occasion, taking disciplinary action could, itself, prove as disruptive of the labour process as the indiscipline it was supposed to control. And more broadly, disciplining tended to destroy co-operation between management and workers, and reinforce the alienation and resistance already engendered within the fragmented labour process. Indeed we find that management's use of disciplinary action was not simply a method of minimising the impact of specific problems, such as absenteeism or undisciplined behaviour, which derived from sources outside the factory - and had disruptive effects on the organisation and flow of work within it. The labour process and nature of the authority relations themselves engendered resistances, which took on similar forms of "indiscipline", such as absenteeism. The use of disciplinary action by management can, therefore, be seen as aimed, crucially, at pre-empting opposition and breaking down such resistance.

In part one of this Chapter, these arguments are developed in respect of the three main areas where management used disciplinary action - attendance, factory conduct and job performance. This discussion is preceded by an outline of the methods which were used: a combination of personal determination or bullying and the systematic use of a procedure agreed by the union. Victimisation as a particular aspect of management's methods

can also be identified. Although this is less a method in itself as the selective application of the other two.

The main impact of management's disciplining fell on the women workers, and this was not necessarily because there were more of them. In the first place, the women posed particular problems of control, deriving from the special nature of their commitment to employment. And secondly, women workers filled the most tightly constrained sections of the labour process, which generated a high degree of resistance, but which required a high degree of control. Most of the men, on the other hand, occupied positions which carried some authority and/or were subject to looser surveillance. And this was a consequence of both the nature of the work they did and its relationship to that sphere of the labour process occupied by women.

In part II , we examine the implications of management's strategy by using direct disciplining as a means of labour control. Our conclusions are that this can be seen as both a consequence, but also to an important extent a cause, of the women workers' more vulnerable position in the firm.



PART 1: DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES

Disciplinary Methods: Personal and procedural

PERSONAL DOMINATION

BSR management's arbitrary exercise of punitive sanctions against its workforce had a long and inglorious history, stemming from the days of Dr MacDonald, the company's founder. Stories abound of his virulent anti-unionism and his practice of sacking whole sections or shifts, on the spot, for some perceived misdemeanour or show of recalcitrance. (5)

"Oh, he was a terror, he was ... I've seen him sack a man for picking a piece of firewood up and putting it to one side. He was a terrible man".  
Jim (Moulding Shop Serviceman) (6)

But by 1970, following a fierce recognition struggle in Scotland and the intervention of the CIR and accompanying the exit of Dr MacDonald, the company had agreed to concede unionisation. This heralded some major changes in management's methods:

"It was a traumatic period, we had to get ... the old ways that we were indoctrinated with and trained with, and accepted. .. We just had to ... er, accept that it was another situation to be dealt with - and we just dealt with it. We just had to learn the new techniques ... took us a long time, possibly about 3 or 4 years. But, gradually, I think, we work with it reasonably well now". Barry White (Factory Manager) (7)

The procedural changes accompanying union recognition, removed the power of summary dismissal from foremen - such decisions being referred to the level of departmental manager. But management's tyranny had not thereby been relegated to the past. Many managers and foremen still remained who had learnt their bullying under Dr McDonald; such as the machine-shop foreman Jenny had to see as a shop steward, for example:

"As a matter of fact nobody likes the man that sacked the lad, he's an arrogant man, you know. And he shouted at me and said it was nothing to do with me. And I said, 'well, it is I think, because he's come ... 'it's still nothing to do with you' he says. 'there's nothing you can do. You can't do anything about it', he says. 'I sacked him and that's it' he says, 'I don't want him on these grounds'. And - they said to me don't let him brow-beat you, because he will if he's got the chance, you know". Jenny (Final Assembly) (8)

The style was widely known:

"I just don't tell people that I work at BSR and that I'm a supervisor! (laughs). Put it like that!

Not because of being ashamed, but people say, 'Oh you're one of them little hitlers are you? They have this reputation because some of them are." Jill (Supervisor-Final Assembly) (9)

#### PROCEDURAL DISCIPLINING

In the West Midlands, the company had agreed to recognise the GMWU and conferred sole negotiating rights on this union, on the basis of an agreement known as the "blue book". (10) The agreement contained provision for employees' representation and a six-stage grievance procedure. Usefully, from the point of view of managerial control, the union had agreed to ratify the company's rule book (Clause 28) and clauses stipulating managerial prerogatives over disciplinary employees (clauses 31(ii) and 34). Management's unilateral disciplinary powers were now, therefore, "mutually agreed". More significantly, perhaps, the exercise of those powers was also formalised.

The blue-book agreement saw the introduction of a disciplinary procedure:

10. A disciplinary procedure has been introduced, the purpose of which is to protect the interests and safety of the employee and the Company in a just manner. It is, therefore, essential that employees should be aware of and abide by the following rules and standards of work and the procedure to be followed when such standards are not observed.

"Safety of the employee" was taken care of under a paragraph entitled "(a) Action constituting a Hazard". The remaining clauses "(b) Action not constituting a Hazard" and "(c) Performance and Conduct" listed various other labour problems management might come across in the course of their duties, along with the appropriate sanctions which were open to them. Clause (c) was of particular interest. This placed on a formal footing, control by the direct exercise of management's disciplinary powers - in the three key areas relating especially to women. Namely, work attendance, job performance and factory conduct.

(c) Performance and Conduct:

In the normal course of their duties Foremen are expected to make employees aware of shortcomings such as:—

- (i) Output performance
- (ii) Conduct
- (iii) Absenteeism and bad timekeeping (the latter includes clocking in punctually by the recognised shift starting time and clocking out not before the recognised shift finishing time).

Employees are reminded the above are examples only and not intended to be sole reasons for disciplinary actions.

In cases of persistently poor performance or conduct, absenteeism and bad timekeeping, the following formal procedure shall be used:—

Management could use a system of warnings - to be delivered to the employee and witnessed by a shop steward. The first warning, delivered orally, was nevertheless, to be entered on the workers' record and the entry signed by the employee. The second "final" warning, accompanied by a written form and threat of suspension and/or dismissal for further offences, was also lodged in the record. Warnings were supposed to be deleted after a "clear" period of six months. In practice, the procedures did not seem to cause too many problems for management, as this shop steward explained:

"For warnings - the shop steward is supposed to go in. But if the person doesn't ask for one, they don't bother to call you. So they often do get warned without one there. I've told them not to sign unless a shop steward is with them. They've had me over that - for telling them not to sign. I said, 'Yes I have' - because it tells you - in the book in my book, that any warning verbal or written, must be in the presence of a shop steward.

They frighten some into it, and they tell them 'Oh, it'll be ripped up in 3 days. But you don't know. I've told them, not with this management, not the way they are here. Myself, I think that goes on your record. So if they want to re-apply for a job - its all on their record."

Nora (Final Assembly) (11)

And it is clear that the process, though formalised, had lost little in terms of intimidation:

"It frightens people - it does quite honestly. I know its part of the agreement, but I've gone in with them, and as I've been walking with them I've said 'well, you'll have a warning, you'll see a piece of paper, but whatever you do, keep calm' because you can see they are starting to get all irate or upset."

Pearl (Convenor) (12)

The procedure provided management with a systematic means of applying discipline, (and, as we go on to show, it was also used as a means of systematically disciplining the female workforce). But the other side of the procedural system was, of course, that it limited the possibility of summary dismissal. And unless/until "inefficient" operators "sacked themselves", "weeding out" might take several weeks.

For this reason the system of recruitment and selection was important, and it was designed so as to minimise control problems (such as those above), which might ensue. New workers were interviewed by Personnel and given a basic dexterity test - fitting pegs into holes. But selection was really only made after

recruitment, the worker being put on a month's trial or probation. During this period, their attendance, performance and conduct was monitored and reported by first-line supervision who gave their opinion as to whether their employment should be continued. Since it had been agreed with the union that these workers would not be represented (even though they were paying subscriptions on 'check-off') to a significant degree the procedure for new starters helped to restore - if not the traditional hire, at least some of the summary "fire" - powers of the immediate supervisory levels of management. (13)

"Our old problem of absenteeism"

Questions concerning the employment of women workers, their "commitment" and the problems of management, seem to come together most frequently with "absenteeism". The struggle over attendance (for management) and time-off (for workers), which this concept amalgamates, is not, of course a matter solely confined to women. But their particular relation to employment, especially when they have dependent children, raises the issue forcefully and in a specific kind of way.

Wheresoever the causes lie though, workers' "unregulated" time-off constitutes a control problem for management: "Absenteeism tends to render the most carefully designed work assignment systems academic". Herdin (1972) p.168. Given the nature of the labour process at BSR, we should not be surprised to find this notion echoed by management there:

"Invariably ... one of the biggest problems we've got is absenteeism. We can load the labour onto the sections - we have a certain desired level of output - we put the necessary labour onto the section - and it doesn't come into work. Now this varies between 10 and 15% a day. Sometimes its a little bit lower, possibly 8 or 9 - usually round about 10%. So, obviously you've then got - not just a loss of operatives on a section ... (but) a loss of skills. So ... you've got an imbalance.

If you had 10% of your labour absent at any one time, your output would be expected to be down 10%. But if you've got a disproportionate number of operatives missing from one particular section ... the lines, particularly the main lines are divided into various areas. You've got your basic sub-assembly, and you've got soldering and inspection, and you have the tests and the packing. And if you have the labour missing disproportionately from those various sections - the whole thing is unbalanced. And this is one of the biggest problems we've got - it's basically absenteeism.

Barry White (Factory Manager) (14)

If the commonly held view associating high(er) levels of absenteeism with women workers is accepted at face value, there would seem to be contradictory considerations in respect of their use in this labour process. What strategies might management therefore use, in order to overcome the potential problems?

The manager's comment that a 10% drop in labour could be reflected in a 10% drop in output, might suggest that it was worthwhile employing more labour, especially since absentees were not paid wages and absenteeism levels were quite stable. (15) On the other hand, the most disruptive aspect of absenteeism seemed to lie in the uncertainty of its distribution. And one way round this was to employ a system of floats. Both of these suggestions had been rejected.

"(If) you said, 'Now look I'll put another 10 operators on that line to cover absenteeism', well, first of all you've got to have 10 people who've got to know all the skills. Which then

leaves you in the situation where they're ...  
they're sort of super-skilled, in that sense."

And

"It just doesn't pay you to overman to cover  
absenteeism". Barry White (Factory Manager) (16)

Management's strategy was, instead, to use disciplining as  
an attempted means of control, rather than more labour. And then  
to utilise absenteeism as a further basis for work intensification  
- with movement of labour. (Which could, of course, be blamed  
on the miscreant absentees). Perhaps as we shall now go on to  
suggest, this strategy was in some sense a recognition of the fact  
that the women workers' absenteeism was as much a problem of the  
labour process as for it.

Although it is tempting to do so, where women workers are  
concerned, the "causes" of absenteeism should not be seen to lie  
entirely outside the workplace. Some studies have shown that women  
workers do not necessarily have higher levels of absenteeism per se,  
and that these are more closely associated, for both sexes, with  
the type of work they are employed to do. There is much evidence  
(but unfortunately no figures) to suggest that absenteeism was  
strongly associated with the nature of the labour process at BSR  
and it rose markedly in periods when recruitment stopped and the  
general rate of intensification was increased.

"There's 77 off the lines today (mid-January).  
It's terrible - I've only got 3 solderers on  
each station, there should be 4. We can't keep  
the counts up - they are down for every line.  
You can't just put anyone onto soldering".  
Bert Long (Factory Manager) (17).

The constant reshuffling necessitated by unpredictable  
absenteeism was certainly a chore managers felt they could do  
without. But it can be seen as arising as a consequence (or "cost")

of the high(er) levels of "absenteeism" management itself sustained in the labour force by means of its deliberate "labour shortage" and (periodic) non-recruitment policies. The latter, in particular, resulted in "unpredictable" absences and gaps in the workforce, producing the problem of "imbalance" mentioned above.

The women workers' voluntary absence could not, therefore, be "controlled" and, in the context of management production policies, it would not be controlled for:

"So, absenteeism is one of the biggest problems we've got, in trying to nail them. We just keep picking away at it and pecking it away. We're NOT very successful at it. But the point is we don't know how bad it would be, if we didn't do it. The trouble is, we don't show a great deal of progress in curbing absenteeism ... circumstances, the wage packet and life generally - seem to determine the absentee rate - rather us. But, we just don't know how bad it would be if we DIDN'T take some action about it." Barry White (Factory Manager) (18).

To the extent that the labour process required a high degree of managerial regulation, and this generated resistance in the workforce, management's strategy was to maintain high levels of intimidation by the use of systematic disciplinary action. We would argue that the rationale for this choice cannot simply be found in terms of its utility regarding control over attendance, since it did not facilitate this (it was ineffective, for example, when sick children required the presence of mothers at home). This strategy was aimed rather more at attacking the women's use of absenteeism, as a form of resistance. And this can be seen more clearly in the context of these and other areas where high levels of disciplining were maintained as well.



Factory Conduct: the problem of compliance

"Indiscipline" on the shop floor was, along with work attendance or time-off, one of the more problematic areas for management to control through the direct exercise of their disciplinary powers: all three methods - procedural disciplining, personal domination and victimisation, were brought to bear. But none seemed wholly adequate to the task. It was more of a war of attrition.

"Just keep at it. There's no answer to it at all. If you see somebody do something wrong then they've got to be picked up. Now, today, there's the (Christmas) season coming along - balloons in the air - flick them up in the air and blow them from one line to the other. So as soon as you see them ... burst them. Don't say anything to them. You don't criticise them - you don't use the big stick and say, 'We'll take you through procedure' - it's just a waste of time. It's just time off the lines for the workers. And that's a position where you've got our opinion versus the labour's. As you walk down - you don't even stop! Burst the balloon - and then a big howl will go up. Then let's find another one and blow that one up! And, eventually, you wear them down - like that.

You will have, on occasions, to take them through procedure ... , I mean, there's the occasion when we get fighting on the shopfloor between two girls - and in which case, you obviously treat both the same. You have to take that through procedure. That sort of discipline, you MUST take through the procedure. But the other discipline, you have to use the force of personality of the individual supervisor - just to keep things on the straight and narrow. And that's basically where it comes down to the force of the personality of the supervisor - no procedure in the world could operate, because you've got to understand them".

Barry White (Factory Manager) (19).

Although, in many respects it was more readily (but not exclusively) associated with the younger girls, "indiscipline" was not, of course, a recent problem. Some features were apparently new. But other aspects, such as its intractability, seemed, on the face of it, unchanging. Part of the reason for this seeming

intractability to management was, that like absenteeism (20), indiscipline on the shop floor appeared far more susceptible to influences outside the factory than their own activities within it. Indeed, the very causes seemed to emanate from beyond the workplace.

".... I wouldn't say it was a recent problem ... On hind-sight, I s'pose you would - since the easing off of discipline in schools, and it has eased off tremendously. I think they're coming into industry with a lack of sense of discipline. Whereas the older people - with older people, we're talking about anybody over 30 - whether they, because of the older generation, they're more disciplined; or whether they (are) because they're older and more mature - its very hard to tell. But, I'm just trying to cast my mind back, as to whether the people I remember as young people, are better disciplined now as they've got older or ... No, I can't ... I wouldn't like to say. But certainly, I would say this - that young people tend to be ill-disciplined.

"... They're rebellious about listening to instructions, or about being criticised for doing bad work. They tend to want to walk around when they feel like it. They have to be told repeatedly to stay: 'this is your section, you stay on your section, you have to ask permission to leave your section. You don't just wander round the factory where you like'. .... er, particularly at Christmas time ... alcohol is a big problem. Not so much in the factory - I've no doubt about it ... I know it goes on, but its very, very carefully concealed... but outside - particularly during the lunch breaks, for the days up to Christmas - they tend to drink a lot of alcohol, and of course that brings a problem back on the shopfloor. In that sense they haven't got a sense of responsibility or sense of behaviour. But at the same time, having said that, some of the young girls - if they put their mind to it, are some of the finest workers you've got. Barry White (Factory Manager) (21).

Thus the well-spring of management's problems appeared to exist wholly independently of themselves. Like the alcohol, indiscipline was something which was brought into the factory from sources which appeared to lie outside the gates. Management identified workers' rebelliousness regarding instructions, as a particular problem of

indiscipline which they encountered. Less frequent, but sometimes a dramatic extension of this, was the problem of workers fighting - against supervisors or for different reasons, amongst themselves. Overall, there was the question of generally rebellious conduct, most often found among the young girls. This kind of indiscipline could prove a tricky problem for management, in the sense that their sanctions could frequently be found unavailing. And it was even more of a problem when they were seen to be. Kim committed a 'capital offence' by making just this point.

"Well, we know, like, when they've first left school and they're still, you know - childishness. And they tend to think that they can do what they want. Because I know I was the same when I first started (....) But once, once you've got to keep going down the office and getting into trouble for it, you suddenly realise.

Well Kim, she didn't want to know! You know, she wanted to do what she wanted to do. And they suspended her over doing something and she didn't come in the next day either. They suspended her for 3 days and she decided to have an (extra) day off. So when she came back to work they sacked her. (What was she doing - what were her antics?) She was like, well, naughty. You know. She didn't want to do anything she didn't want to work, she didn't want to speak, she wanted to shout at you and hit you - you know, it was entirely up to her. She could do it, that was what she thought you know".  
Kathy (Paint Shop) (22)

"The more hazardous ... well, not say hazardous, but... aggressive forms of ill-discipline - are not a big problem. Maybe once every 3 months, you might have a couple of people fighting - in which case, depending on circumstances - we usually suspend both, and then it settles down again. It usually flares up then goes down just as quickly".  
Barry White (Factory Manager) (23)

A surprisingly high number of incidents - physical fights between women workers were mentioned by the shop stewards interviewed.

"I've had a couple of girls fighting - got them off with suspension. Swearing - there's not a lot, because as I say, they're mostly sensible married women, you know."

(Are they automatically suspended for fighting?)

"Well, it depends who you're fighting! I mean, if you fight a supervisor ... No, I think its automatically suspended - Yes. Sometimes, yes - there has been one or two sacked".

Sally (Sub-Assembly) (24)

"Everybody falls out really don't they, under strain. I mean there's some days you have a big old argument and you can hear it going on, you know.

And the next day, they can be talking again".

(Is it worse on the lines?)

"Yes, I imagine so, but there has been quite a few arguments on the other parts of the section. I mean there has been fighting in other parts of the factory. It's never really got down to fighting on our line. Arguments yes. There again, I should say that would be up to whether supervision gets in quickish like, you know.

Edna (Final Assembly) (25)

(What is the thing they fall out over?)

It's the work, you know, they say 'you're not taking your share of the work on'. Well, if you get a bit angry with somebody and you start telling them a bit, you know, they lose their temper and have a go at you and so you start arguing - and you fall out".

(So you think its the work that causes more aggro?)

"Yes"

Kathy (Paint Shop) (26)

"It's the atmosphere they work in, and the tension ... instead of counting to ten, they land out ..."

Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly) (27)

It is not difficult to locate the sources of such "mis-conduct" within the labour process itself. And the same is true of the problem of workers' rebelliousness regarding instructions. In fact, this appeared to be overwhelmingly related to management's practice of movement of labour and intensification of work. On the final assembly lines, for example, it was the first-line supervisors, responsible for the daily, and hourly organisation and adjustment of the labour process, who gave the most direct orders to operators

regarding their work allocation and job performance. As we have noted, the most significant part of a supervisor's job was called "balancing the line". This entailed filling the spaces left - by the temporary absentees or those who had left and management had failed to replace - by moving operators from one job to another and also by doubling-up the work. This meant that an "unwomanned" job was shared out among some of the operators present, who were allocated an additional task to do or component to fit.

"They sort it out like - from whoever's in. Like the girls that are already in - they sort of double-up and things like that, or they move, you know. And there again, they've got 4 repair girls but when people don't come in, they use us as well".

(So who does the repairs?)

"They pile up when we go"

(What is most common 'bad behaviour,') "I think it's disapproving of, movement of labour. Answering back, you know, - 'I'm not going to do it'".  
Edna (Final Assembly) (28).

Although "doubling-up" of the kind described was more likely to happen at group assembly than individual or machine production jobs, these last could also be (and therefore, were) intensified by the addition of extra tasks; for example, labouring - fetching and carrying materials or gauging and inspection between operations. In every area, it appeared, the operators almost universally objected to being moved and being given the extra work.

It was certainly a difficult job for the supervisors to do and the system did lend itself to victimisation and favouritism. Thus the most important qualities required of a supervisor from the worker's point of view, was fairness and impartiality - against a bad supervisor there was no redress. Thus "the discipline problem" at this first-line level might occasionally reveal the fundamentally

coercive relationship between operator and management bared to its violent roots;

" .... she used to be a supervisor: she was one of the world's worst - for victimisation.... Yes, terrible. If a girl's face - when they come - didn't fit, she used to play 'ell. .... It was the Telford lot, I was telling you about, - I 'ad to get 2 off 'er throat - one day - you know, they'd got 'er pinned up against the wall. When she was on line 1 and... it was 'er attitude see, towards people - she, actually 'ad got the attitude like BSR 'ad got - you're a number, and you're a name, and she used to treat them like that - and very often she was abused".  
Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly) (29)

Leaving aside, for the moment, the problem of workers falling out with each other, the main issues identified under the heading "indiscipline" on the factory floor concern a general problem of compliance to the rules and rigorous constraints on freedom in the factory: "This is your section, you stay on your section..."; and to management's orders regarding the allocation of work. Just as disciplinary action could not secure attendance, no more could it secure cooperation with respect to these, in any positive sense. It was aimed, instead, at attacking potential or actual opposition.

Workers "lack of compliance" and outright rebelliousness can be seen of course, as resistance - both to the general unfreedom ("they call this place Belsen") and to management's driving, speed-up, mobility and intensification of work. Disciplinary action was taken against those who transgressed - as a punishment and as a warning to others. Thus, in a specific sense, it was used to underpin management's general production policy regarding the "productive" use of female labour by undermining the resistance its application engendered.

Taken in the context of the other areas where disciplinary action was applied as well, however - such as absenteeism and job-performance,

it can also be seen as a further contribution to the maintenance of a high general level of intimidation on the shop floor. Management were clearly reliant on this to ensure an adequate level of overall compliance and to forestall explicit resistance to their rigorous control demands. This was because once it became "too late", (e.g. the "balloons incident" cited by the factory manager), disciplinary action could not be relied on to secure control and in other respects it might also be "counter productive".

One area where taking disciplinary action was considered effective in a direct sense, however, was in regard to job performance.

#### Job Performance

"We have a little bit of trouble with operators not doing their jobs properly. In other words, they have to be taken through procedure - because they are either negligent or deliberately malicious..."

(So you find it effective, to give warnings and things, for that?) "Oh yes. Now that is effective. If you've got an operator that does a bad job, then you can take her through procedure - and we've never had one go to the limit, through bad work ...

Then, you have the low performers - at a 66 performance. You have them below that actually, that's when you have to try and get them to ... (66 is the minimum earnings level). And then you have the high flyers at 120. Anything above 120, we investigate immediately, to find out why they're earning 120. We assume they must be either short-circuiting the job or ... fiddling".  
Barry White (Factory Manager) (30)

As noted earlier, the agreement specifically covered the contingency of management being required to use discipline in order to control the way operators performed their work. The procedure is outlined in this incident which occurred on paint inspection:

"We had to go down to the office with Lyn yesterday, ... because three main-plates came back which really

were bad, you know. You could really see what had been happening. She'd been talking, took them off and just looked and marked them on the back, and of course - she was given a warning for it ... This warning lasts for three months. If she passes any more bad work within three months she'll get a final warning. If she doesn't, then she's O.K., and this one will be, like, scrapped. And if she does it again like, after three months, then, she'll get another warning.

(Do you think three months is too long?)

"No not really, 'cos it should be 6 months, but they normally break it down to three".

Kathy (Paint Shop) (31)

This was an example of disciplining for "bad work", which, in contrast to poor performance, where workers failed to produce the required output, seems to have been relatively rare, from management's point of view.

"I wouldn't actually say that there's a lot of bad assembling - it's mostly bad parts".

Jill (Supervisor- Final Assembly) (32)

One reason for its low incidence was that the closely integrated method of working tended to maximise the immediate pressure of one worker on another to maintain the quality of output.

"Well, you see they can't turn out work which is bad. Say another member passes a bad job onto another, right? And that person can't do it because its bad off the person in front of her, well we have to go through all that ... But, well now, how can you make a good wire out of a bad one? and sometimes - more often than not, this is what we find. It goes through inspection, right through to the main lines, through bad wire in the beginning".

Pip (Sub-Assembly) (33)

It also, of course, resulted in pressures to maintain the work rate as well.

"It'll happen - if you get a slow or new person, the one next to her will start grumbling. And when the units start piling up, they say 'Oh I shall have that lot next - when someone comes to help clear it off' - which is quite true".

Nora (Final Assembly) (34).



Yet, despite the advantages to management of a system where workers tended to drive each other to reach and maintain the pace, we have noted in one discussion of the payment system, that it was discipline rather than any other managerial strategy which management chose for their main intervention. While this might have been expected, perhaps, in respect of non-teamwork jobs and/or those with fixed performances (on moulding machines, for example, workers were paid at a fixed performance rate and received warnings if they failed to reach the count three times in a week) - it was by no means confined to these wherever they worked, the women were always liable to be disciplined for poor performance.

"I had a woman who'd been here ten years pulled up over poor performance . She said she'd never been told she had to achieve a basic count - on crystals, 42 an hour - to get day-rate. She'd been paid day-rate and been on the job ten years - but had never been taken into the office about her work before. They had always insisted on the good quality of work from that department before, and in this respect, her work was satisfactory. I told the woman, if that was what they wanted - to give them quantity. But it's bad. Some people feel embarrassed about going into the office. I personally feel its because they're putting pressure on to get rid of the part-timers there. Because I was never told to get a count out. All they said was, as long as they're good ones, that's what we want. And she's never had to be taken into the office before about her work".  
Janet (Sub-Assembly) (35).

As we have seen management were continuously looking for methods of speeding up and intensifying the workload. Disciplining for poor performance was therefore a crucial means of driving up the pace. For instance, in the moulding department, an area where management was particularly anxious to increase productivity - the practice was to move tools from one machine to another, at the same time, increasing the count required. Although in this particular example, disciplining failed to establish the new pace, in cases where the count was not

actually impossible, it would clearly help to do so:

"For eighteen months I was on the same job at the same count. But now they're changing tools a lot more often. And I was given a job and failed to get the count. He came and brought me a warning and I signed it. And I said, 'Right - now you come and tell me how to get it out.' ' I'll give you half an hour' he says. I says 'alright - half an hour will do'. He came and there was no way I could get the count out he was asking for. So he stayed a further half an hour and instead of powdering every time, I had to powder every other time, and I got four more in that half an hour. And then for weeks and weeks and weeks, my name was on the poor performance sheet. But after a month, they took the job off the machine and moved it somewhere else and this is what they do. If you can prove - or they want to put the count up, they take it off the machine, take it into the toolroom and when it comes out, put it back onto another machine, so nobody's got a check on what the counts are you see..."  
Madge (Moulding Shop) (36)

While it is clear that disciplining poor performance could be used, quite specifically to underpin management's practices regarding speed up and work intensification, and to undermine opposition to these, we can again, note that an overall consequence of this, was to increase the general level of intimidation on the shop floor. Thus we can see the way that a high disciplinary load, maintained by systematic use of the warnings procedure, kept up a generalised pressure on operators:

"Oh, I think it could be better, the way they treat them, yes. I mean over this value on the jobs. When they get them to sign papers to say that they've been warned because they haven't done the count - they don't take everything into consideration. I mean there could be a machine broke down, and ... you know. And they're ... when they do have you, to tell you about the value of your count, you know - they're sort of 'OFF' you really, after that. They'm looking for the smallest fault after you've signed that paper."  
Sarah (Press Shop) (37)

This pressure had other, more specific applications too. Operators considered "inefficient" could be forced to leave by being subjected to reprimands. Especially if they were moved onto a different job which they found difficult to do, and found themselves unable to escape (further) punishment:

"They took her off her machine and put her on another job that she couldn't possibly do. So after that - she says 'Pip, I can't do this job. She was had in the office (to be disciplined for poor performance J.H), and she says, 'Oh, I'm going to leave'. So I says, 'Well you're a fool'. But she left".  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (38)

From management's point of view, the system seemed to operate fairly effectively, so that, in fact, they rarely had to terminate workers' employment. The phrase used at BSR was that "they had sacked themselves".

We have been looking to explain the high and sustained levels of disciplinary action taken by management in respect of the female labour force at BSR.

Clearly, the disciplinary load is variable. And to the extent that it is seen as a response to events by management it is liable to vary both with the nature and frequency of the problems arising, from the employment of women in the workplace, and the significance of these problems in terms of other criteria. Chief among the latter we have identified the mode of organisation of the labour process, which to a large extent determines what kind of disruptive impact the different problems might have, and therefore, the degree of necessity for their minimisation.

Nevertheless, we have noted that the responses chosen by management are not necessarily the only or even the most appropriate means of minimising either the nature or the frequency of the specific

problems that arose. (For example, disciplining absenteeism does not facilitate the attendance of women with domestic commitments). We have noted, instead, that management's responses could be more appropriately viewed as being aimed at attacking and forestalling oppositional activity on the workers' part. And this is the sense in which the disciplinary control strategy fitted in with the effective pursuance of production policy. Indeed, the disciplinary load could be seen to vary, in line with this, on a seasonal basis. In slack periods, when recruitment stopped and the labour force was run down and used even more intensively, management's reorganisation and "balancing" - which the workers opposed - was increasingly necessary, and thus, resulted in an increased disciplinary load.

In proposing, however, that workers' resistance is a significant aspect entwined in "discipline problems" which appear to have other kinds of sources, and that this is the element managerial strategy is more concerned to address, we do not move away from the view of disciplinary action as a managerial response. But we need to note, first, that as a response it is not inevitable; it is in fact "strategic". Management can and do always exercise choice as to whether, when and how to respond with disciplinary action. Thus, secondly, to this extent disciplining can also be used in an "offensive" way. The level of the disciplinary load is not necessarily, therefore, simply a measure of the nature and frequency of the problems that arise - from employing particular types of worker in a particular kind of way. It is also determined by management's choice and ability to initiate actions which facilitate their overall strategy or particular aspects of it.

"Yes, poor performance. This is something that I haven't had before - and it's only recently that they've started hauling them in on this charge, you know. It's been the last few months, it's been since we've had our wage rise. I think they're out to sort a few out, you know".  
Sally (Sub-Assembly) (39)

We can, therefore, propose that the level of the disciplinary load is itself strategic. That management chose to maintain relatively high levels of intimidation in general on the shop floor by taking disciplinary action on a systematic basis. Furthermore these levels (or the "size of the load") was varied strategically "being topped up" by the occasional "purge" - as a preliminary, perhaps to a speed-up and intensification drive.

We cannot, however, assume these control strategies were always, and ever, successful. We need therefore, to examine the impact of managerial disciplining on the women workers themselves; in order to assess what kind of problems it engendered the implications for their ability to respond in terms of these, and their position in the company overall.

PART 2

THE PROBLEM OF EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS: DOMINATION  
AND DISCIPLINE.

"It's the petty rules and tyranny - like only  
three minutes to go to the toilet - that upsets  
the women, to be told anything like that".  
Nora (Final Assembly) (40)

"Well, I think sometimes they treat them like  
dogs. Some of them, I won't say all ...."  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (41)

Disciplinary action taken against workers throws up in the  
starkest way, the issue of capitalist power and authority in the  
workplace, because by its practice, employment relations are  
revealed in inter-personal terms. In this Part we look at the  
impact of the employment relationship, characteristically coercive  
and marked by power inequality, on the women workers. The forms  
it took were, to some extent a consequence of both their sex  
and their vulnerable position as workers in the labour market, which  
are, of course, linked. But we carry the investigation further,  
going on to see how these employment relations, specifically in the  
form of management's disciplining, operated also as a cause of  
the women workers' particular vulnerability by increasing their  
employment insecurity.

We have proposed that management's use of discipline should be  
seen as a central component of their production policy and their  
means of organising the labour process. Its effectiveness derived  
from the fundamentally unequal and coercive nature of the employment  
relationship itself, but its impact on the labour force was borne  
unevenly. This was due to the fact that different groups of  
workers stood in a different relationship to the employers on the  
labour market, and also because groups stood in a different relation

to each other and the employer in the labour process. The main axis of differentiation in both of these spheres lay along the sexual divide; but within each sex, groups of workers were differently placed as well, in the main according to family circumstances for the girls and women and age/skill levels for the boys and men. So having first identified general features of the employment relationship which might be considered specific to the women workers, we go on to examine the impact of their particular expression in the form of management's practice of disciplining. First with regard to work attendance or time-off, and secondly in relation to the execution or performance of their work; bearing in mind the important question of job control, and the context of management's pressure for speed-up and labour intensification. This gives a clearer basis for establishing the women workers needs and demands regarding employment relations both at BSR and generally.

Sexism in relations of domination: "the men just wouldn't stand for it"

In our society, employment relations in general are characterised by power inequality - the domination of capital over labour. Male or female managers hold positions of power over the workforce which finds expression in many forms.

"Our foreman used to always shout at the women. I told him, they wanted to be treated like human beings. We had an incident arose over the fans. There's cold air blows down on some parts of floor. But other parts are too hot. People complained - we had a lot of illness on the lines - but the foreman shouted at the women for asking for the fans to be turned off - 'Bloody women! Never bloody satisfied..'"  
Janet (Sub -Assembly) (42)

(Do you think they choose the right people to be supervisors?)

"Not always. You get some very ... you get some vicious ones, you know. You get some, they make the women's lives a misery - some of them. Some can be very nasty ..."  
Sally (Sub-Assembly) (43)

WORKERS AS WOMEN

Since the social relations of production in general and the management/worker hierarchy in particular are structured along sex as well as class lines, they also incorporate sexism. This is the social and ideological expression of sexual inequality and the practice of oppression. The combination of sexism and the employment relationship is as powerful as it is pervasive; and it is difficult to disentangle the fusion of strands which result. The fusion for example constitutes, in this particular instance, a male manager's contempt, tackled by a female shop steward.



"I say's to him - 'well Charlie, fancy telling the women a thing like that! I said. I said 'What do you think them women am on that line?' And, of course, then he smirked, he said, 'I know what them am! Hoho! As if to say, well they were soft you see. So I said, 'Don't you! Don't you ever let me see you put that smirk on your face again, regarding the women on that line! I said, 'because if I come in here and see that smirk on your face which - I know what you were going to ....' He said, 'I didn't say it' I said, 'No, but your bloody smirk was enough ...' I said, 'you've got good women, and you've got good workers,' I said, 'and it's about time you people appreciated them'".  
Nora (Final-Assembly) (44)

The fusion of sexism and the exercise of capitalist power and authority in the workplace means that the social relations of production have a particular form, nature and content where women workers are concerned. Something of this is expressed by two women quoted below (including a rather nice observation by one of them, on management training).

"It's the way they go about it. It's the way they approach the woman - their manner, they wouldn't speak to their wives like they speak to the workforce. They think you're just ...

One girl was singing. She was working, but she was singing. J.H. went across to her and she happened to make a mistake on some job on a pick-up arm. He shouted at her in front of everybody, so she cried. She cried all morning ... He shouldn't have shouted - he could have had a quiet word with her. What if somebody had shouted at him in front of everybody - would he have liked it? NO! They wouldn't stand for it, they'd give you a back-handed one!

But it's the approach. And as a matter of fact, they have to go - every now and again - management to know how to .... they have to have lessons, to know how to approach the people. Well it's a bad thing when they have to do that. Shows a bad up-bringing! It shows how they've been dragged up"  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (45)

"Some of the management talk to the girls as if they're dirt and I know this has happened - I mean, it's been brought up - but I mean, let's face it we're all human beings. Well we're supposed to be all equal aren't we? So one's no better than another and if you've got to be spoke to you should speak to people as you'd like to be spoke to. But there is one or two of them, that are inclined to think some of the girls are dirt, and they shouldn't do. The one I've heard - he talks to the girls as if they're rubbing rags - one of them does. Eunice (Final Assembly) (46)

Moreover, the women perceived that there definitely were aspects of their relations with management which were peculiar to themselves. More often than not they observed that men would not be treated in the same way. But this observation was generally accompanied by an explanation in terms of the women's position - their relative "weakness", rather than in terms of their being specifically female. Might it, in fact, have been the case that the treatment itself was also, qualitatively different? Some recognition of this was, in fact, present in their discussions.

(If management were dealing with men, would they behave the same?)

"No way! Well, they wouldn't get away with it ... the way they talk to the women .... You're not a face, you're not a human being you're a number - a name and a number to them: which is wrong, you wouldn't treat a dog like that - well, I don't think so".

Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly) (47)

(Do you think they behave differently because they are dealing with a large number of women and girls rather than men?)

"Oh yes" (In what respect?). "I think they exploit 'em. I do really - or they try to. I think they try to bully 'em ... in a lot of ways, that they wouldn't do to men - because the men would put their coats on, and they'd be through the door, you know. Because we're women, I suppose they think they can do this, you know - and they 'ave done for so long". Sally (Sub-Assembly) (48)

It is interesting, at this point, to look at a male workers' comments on this question. He was the shop steward for one of the four-hourly shifts in the moulding shop, although he himself worked an eight hour shift as a serviceman there. His constituents were all female. His observations anticipate our discussion of the nature of the male workers' appreciation of the women's problems. The interesting thing about his comments is the way he reveals - by a dichotomy within his discussion, the dual nature of the employment relationship for women. He distinguishes unconsciously, explicitly, and also by a break in his "flow", between those aspects of domination common to all workers and the "other element" which we have identified as sexism, that specifically characterises men's relationships with women.

(What do you think of management's attitude to the women and girls?)

"I think they're pretty fair, you know, generally. There is the odd one that, you know, they might pick on - but I think they deserve it though."

(Do you think they would treat those workers differently if they were men?)

"Oh they would. I think they would yes. (In what way?) Well, some of these chargehands in these moulding departments, I think they try to bully the women. They'll pick on - they'll see a woman who is a little bit scared, and they'll pick on her to bully her - you see what I mean? And, like, make her look a fool, and things like that. Where I think if they'd got men ...

[ Here differentiating between women and men and specifying aspects specific to women, arising from unequal male/female power relations ]

"Well, I think it would happen the same with men if they picked ... If they got one a bit timid, you know. It happens in every factory, things like that - don't it?"

[Here referring to aspects general to men and women as workers arising from unequal capital/labour power relations].

We would argue, therefore, that women workers bear the brunt of both aspects of the unequal power relationships - between men and women, capital and labour, which become entwined. To this extent therefore, relationships between (male) management and women workers are specific; and not wholly generalisable from male workers' experience.

#### WOMEN AS WORKERS

However, the women's perception that they were subjected to worse treatment than the men because they were "weaker" as employees did also have an objective basis, besides the sexism incorporated within social relationships at the workplace. The women workers were more vulnerable on the labour market and their employment within the firm was less secure.

(What do you think about management's attitude to the women and girls?)

"They're not interested in them - only in getting the work out. They'd treat 'em differently if they were men. I tell you - men wouldn't stand for half the women stands for here. A lot of things, everything! The pace, they wouldn't stand for that".

(Why do the women stand it?)

"I don't know. I can't sort the women out meself, you know, for working like they do. I s'pose they're frightened of losing their jobs".

Lorna (Final Assembly) (50)

The fear of losing their jobs was a general one, but it was particularly true of part-time workers who could not have found work at such convenient hours for the same pay elsewhere. There was a waiting list for every shift - on Madge's in the moulding shop

(10 - 2 p.m.) women had had their names down for 2 - 3 years.

"This is the one bad thing about the moulding department that the women will tend to put up with anything to keep their jobs, and keep working. They're not militant, not at all militant. You might just get that odd little few, that are militant sort of thing, but the others - basically, if the roof fell in they'd help .... I told the management this before, I said, 'You treat the moulding shop like I don't know what' I said, 'but if the roof fell in they'd help you move the rubble', and then carry on working the machines! And that's about true."  
Madge (Moulding Shop) (51)

But the part-time workers were not simply vulnerable in terms of having to keep hold of their jobs. Their employment was doubly insecure, since the existence of the jobs themselves was manifestly uncertain:

"We don't get a lot of problems on our line (9.30 - 3.30) I don't know why it is, but the women on my line, they've got to be very pushed before they get het up and start: they've got to be really pushed.

Mind, they do get a little bit excited about rumours. I do try and go to find out straight away - by finding out and telling the women, it sets their minds at rest. If it accumulates a little bit more, then they get het up and everybody has to suffer".

(What kind of thing?)

"Well, they're moving the 9.30 - 3.30's about a lot upstairs and a rumour came down that they were finishing the line. The women decided 'well that's it then, if that's how he feels about us, we ain't going to <sup>bang</sup> his work out, so ...'. So I checked with Mr Smith and he said, 'My dear, as long as that line, your line, is working as they are working, that job is there.' He explained that he was moving the ones upstairs because he could buy in work they were doing. And then problems arose moving part-timers onto jobs which directly fed full-timers because they're not there all the time..."  
Nora (Final Assembly) (52)

While these part-time workers were clearly in a most vulnerable position, none of the women workers could command, in the labour

market, the same range of job choice at a wage equivalent to the one they now earned, in the same way as a man might do. And so the women had to stand for what they assumed the men would not, in the way of bullying and humiliation as an integral part of the employment relationship. We would argue that while male workers similarly placed in relation to their employment as the women were, might equally be subjected to degradatory treatment by male managers, this would still be qualitatively different, to some degree, as a result of the sexism which is also embodied in the employment relationship where women workers are concerned.

What impact did management's strategy of disciplinary control have on the women workers? What particular problems arose as a result of its strategic application? And what were the broader implications of this sustained disciplinary offensive for the women workers' position in the labour process - their employment security and job controls - which might affect their ability to respond effectively to this and any other aspect of management's production policy? We now go on to examine some of these questions.

The Disciplinary Offensive

"I hate them giving warnings actually.  
I think it's degrading. It's degrading,  
I mean when you're doing your best. I  
think when you're doing the best you're  
capable of doing, they should give you best".  
Janet (Sub-Assembly) (53)

If particular manifestations of the degradatory and punitive side of the employment relationship followed in some sense, from the women's especial vulnerability in the labour market and in the firm, it was also, to an important degree a cause of it. To see this it is necessary to examine the impact on the women workers of management's disciplinary offensive, in more detail. We look at this question first in relation to absenteeism or, from the workers' point of view, time-off; and secondly, in respect of their actual job performance.

TIME OFF

As we have already noted, underlying the problems of absenteeism from management's point of view, was a labour recruitment policy which entailed running production the with minimum possible workforce and cutting production, by stopping recruitment and reducing the workforce by "natural wastage" at certain times of the year. This policy directly exacerbated both absenteeism and labour turnover. First, because of the way it was linked to the intensification of work, and second, because of the overall (and increasing) inflexibility in the system regarding work attendance: a reduction in lee-way which resulted from the lack of "cover". This inflexibility increased employment insecurity for women who had domestic responsibilities, even though they were, at the same

time a special target for recruitment. They were forced to leave whenever it became impossible to keep up the attendance demanded by the firm (and also their co-workers).

Alongside this recruitment and production policy, management utilised systematic disciplining to "control" the "attendance problem" which ensued. A close view of the way these powers were exercised, however, suggests that rather more was entailed here than simply getting people to come to work. Management's response to time-off was in every sense a strategic decision; this was so whether the choices involved "regular" disciplining, the timing and focus of their periodic purges, and/or the timing and seriousness of their occasional endeavours to lower the disciplinary threshold. Put into practice by means of personal domination, the procedure and victimisation, disciplining for time-off constituted in fact, the vehicle of a managerial offensive. What implications did this have for the women workers' position - their needs and demands, together with their ability and willingness to pursue them?

If, from management's point of view, the struggle over attendance or time-off was one which they felt they had little choice but to engage in, the manner of this engagement could certainly be varied. Apart from regularly disciplining women who were absent without a doctor's note for three days or more, in a 3-4 week period, they could institute periodic "purges" - pulling in large numbers across the factory or in particular sections:

"We've had more (disciplined) just lately because they've just had a binge on it - they say it's because of productivity bonus. And of course, a lot of women have to take weeks off to go on holiday with their husbands, and this is one of the reasons why they put the purge on at this time of the year".  
Madge (Moulding Shop) (54)



The timing of these purges can be seen, clearly, as strategic. So also were attempts by management to impose a shorter disciplinary threshold both officially and unofficially. From June 1976, for a 12-month trial period, an agreement was drawn up whereby an employee absent twice in three weeks would receive the first warning and if absent once more during the next four weeks - the final warning. One further day in the next four weeks made the person liable to the two-day suspension, the same again could incur dismissal. A "clear" four weeks was required to delete one warning and eight weeks to delete them all.

This "official" attempt to impose a shorter disciplinary threshold, accompanied negotiations wherein the union was attempting to get the company to accept the introduction of a sick pay scheme.

Informal attempts to lower the disciplinary threshold - in line with a general policy of maintaining a generally high level of intimidation by periodic "assaults" - went on all the time.

"Well, sometimes I think when they are making the rules to suit themselves, I wonder where they get them from! You know, they come in and say - two days before you bring a doctor's note in. Now all of a sudden they come round and they say you can't have one day without a doctor's note. Now I mean, they are 80pence - for a doctor's note. (And) you don't know what's going to happen from one day to the next, so how can you keep going down to the doctors and saying I want a doctor's note because I've had to stay at home today, and pay 80 pence for it".  
Jenny (Final Assembly) (56)

Intimidation was used against whole groups or individuals:

"Well there again. I wasn't called in on that. She came out the office and she was crying. And someone said - 'The blasted management'. And I said, 'what's the matter now'. (And this was going out of procedure ). She said - 'I've had to sign a piece of paper - he's telling me I've got to sign it'. She says, 'my dad'll kill me'. And

you know she got really frightened of losing her job. She was really petrified - she couldn't stop crying. And I went out of procedures. I went into Mr G and I said 'Why has she signed a paper without me being there'. And the foreman said - 'Oh, we told her it was nothing, and in 3 weeks time it would be 'ripped up'. I asked 'why has she had to sign it?'. One said, 'She's had so many days off. And they were going out of procedure . Because she hadn't had enough ... you're allowed 2 days off in 3 weeks, she'd only had the 1 day off. She'd had 1 day off - but they said she'd had a lot of time off previously".  
Edna (Final Assembly) (57)

#### REDUCTION IN JOB SECURITY

What impact did such managerial offensives have on the women workers? Apart from increasing job insecurity in general as a result of maintaining overall high levels of intimidation, disciplinary action for time off (or any reason) could increase it directly. First, the system of warnings outlined in the procedure led to suspension and dismissal by stages, and these could be "activated" at any time management chose to fully pursue them.

In the second place, however, employment security could be undermined in a rather more fundamental way, because of the effects of the women's "access to return". The characteristically broken or discontinuous employment pattern of women workers, combined with their high degree of dependence on local employers, makes the opportunity for them to return to previous employment especially significant.

The warnings procedure had made management disciplinings more systematic by "standardising" the mode of their response across the shop floor. It also provided them with the means of keeping

records on the workers they employed, as Janet a shop steward who had once been a supervisor, explained:

"It goes on your records, so if they leave and want to come back, they'll be refused...

When a person leaves, one supervisor fills in a form - stating if she does bad work, is a bad time-keeper - has a lot of time off, causes any trouble etc it goes on the personnel office file. It's bad. That's something which in my opinion should be stopped. You see, I think meself, this was done because they were leaving and coming back and they have the same problems every time with them.

When I was a supervisor, the forewoman used to come for a report on the workers who'd left, and as a supervisor you have to state if you'd be prepared to take a woman back.

I often wonder if they put on that you've been a shop steward. I mean, you've got to cause some problems haven't you? I mean sometimes you stick out, say when they say they want to take a woman into the office ..."  
Janet (Sub-Assembly) (58)

Use of the warnings procedure, according to its formal design, ensured that management's disciplinary action (and workers' default) was recorded because the "papers" were automatically put on file. Formal methods of disciplining increase the scope and variety of means available to management however, because there still remains recourse to "informal" methods as well. So managers could "go through the motions" of giving a warning (i.e. threatening the worker) without actually getting a paper signed. Occasionally they were forced to do it like this because shop stewards or the workers themselves would refuse to "accept" a warning; (by not signing it). In such a case however, the end result might be little different as far as the record was concerned.

"We don't sign ... umm, the ... er papers.  
Now this again is confidential because I ask ..  
I go in with the superintendent - if you get a  
baddy superintendent, although you don't sign  
the form, it still goes onto your record.  
If I can get a good superintendent, work round  
'im, put a bit of charm on, 'e won't fill it in."  
Jill (Supervisor- Final Assembly) (59)

"They frighten some into it. And they tell them,  
'Oh, it'll be ripped up in 3 days'. But I don't  
know. I've told them, not with this management;  
not the way they are here. Myself, I think that  
goes on your record - so if you want to re-apply  
for a job - it's all on the record".  
Nora (Final Assembly) (60)

In the personnel office was a filing cabinet with three  
drawers; each one clearly labelled on the front "Males",  
"Females", and "Unwanted Females".

Since there was, therefore, no safeguard of future employment  
opportunity, management's disciplining constituted an attack on the  
women's job security.

The issue of time-off was the one most often chosen with which  
to mount their offensive - perhaps as a preliminary to increasing  
speed-up or labour intensification, or to facilitate its progress;  
perhaps to undermine a build up of opposition to movement of labour  
or to push up the quit-rate, perhaps to break down an emerging  
growth of confidence and assertion on the part of a section or across  
the factory as a whole.

While the general level of intimidation could exert pressure  
on workers to abandon job protections, and facilitate speed-up,  
there were also specific means which were used by management to  
achieve this.

#### PERFORMANCE

The women workers were commonly subjected to disciplinary action by management for "poor performance", and this was usually to do with their rate of output. Again, it is clear that management's decisions regarding such disciplinary action were also strategic - in the sense of having wider objects than simply the maintenance of production levels and their continuity. They made choices as to the timing, the area of impact and the scope - specific or general - of disciplinary actions taken. And these decisions were often related to drives : instituting speed-up and/or intensification of work across the factory as a whole, or in specific sections. There was thus a similar sense in which these decisions also constituted a general managerial offensive against the workforce.

"Last week I had a lot of warnings. My women were being warned for low performances. And they don't want to know your excuses. The one woman was working an automatic machine! They were ever so incensed about it....

The woman on the automatic machine was working slower because the machine wasn't working properly. And she was having to stop it and take the things off - she was doing it part-manually, but of course it wasn't working as fast as what the count was then you see."

Madge (Moulding Shop) (61)

#### REDUCTION OF JOB SECURITY.

The impact of disciplining workers for poor performance can be identified on two levels which are linked, even though here considered separately. It increased employment insecurity on the one hand and had effects which could directly undermine job controls, on the other.

Employment security was particularly undermined whenever disciplinary action for poor job performance was used, in conjunction with movement of labour and the women were put onto work they could not perform "adequately". The warnings procedure provided for dismissal at the final stage, but generally before this, the worker would have "sacked herself", after being punished for failing to perform on a job she could not do.

#### REDUCTION IN JOB CONTROLS

Disciplining poor work performance, again used in conjunction with movement of labour - which broke job continuity and dispersed job knowledge and information, could further undermine job controls by making it even more difficult for workers to establish and maintain "normal" output rates, while under the pressure of threats:

"I mean now, there's this girl that came into the shop, like my members - and I mean, p'raps they've been here about 5 weeks - and they tell them, if they don't get the performance ... But it isn't .. on the small presses in our shop, you see... they're not on the same job every day. Well, they're different values. But I think they've (the women) got the idea that because one is 700 an hour, every job is 700 an hour ... but they don't put them in the picture you see, and tell them that they're like, different counts. And I think it's all wrong".  
Sarah (Press Shop( 62)

The use of disciplinary action for poor performance on a regular basis, could be used, therefore, to drive operators; forcing them to attain or maintain the extremely high levels of output required. Of course it could be used to increase these levels too, whenever new counts were imposed under direct threat or just general intimidation.

Not only did the use of such disciplinary action inhibit the development of job controls by those subjected to it. It could also lead directly to their abandonment. Under heavy disciplinary pressure, individuals or groups or workers might have to give up, temporarily, protections in respect of work effort in order to protect themselves against intimidation.

"The most common thing is that, my members are telling me, that the value in the job that they've got is too high. You know, they are expected to produce 'x' amount ... the count is too high. And I have to tell them, that probably ... it's probably been valued, you know, 5 or 6 years - and I have to say, 'Look, that job has been proved - someone has done it', - because this is what they say to me, you know : someone's done it".  
Sally (Sub-Assembly) (63)

Under what conditions had "someone done it"? Someone may have done it because normal job controls had broken down under the pressure management could exert. Such strategies of desperation on the workers' part might include for example, attempts to increase the length of the working day and decrease its intensity - by taking the work home.

"I was put on soldering retrads: very fine work four wires, tiny dots - need a steady hand and good eyesight. Also, put on an earth tag, a fifth wire.

One girl used to take them home and fit on all the earth tags - this was before the performance rates came in. They thought that by taking them home it would help them with the performance rates.

Well when I went on - I says 'How on earth do you get this count - 58 an hour for these Tetrad plugs. I could only manage 40. And they were taking them home and doing half the job at home. so of course when they used to bring them back next day with all the earth tags put on, they could do it couldn't they! And they thought it was helping but it wasn't.

The people who did this have all left now, but the count still carries on. It's still 58 and that's just for the daywork". Pip (Sub-Assembly) (64)

Since, under management's driving, this pressure was continuous, it always posed a threat to established rates, if it succeeded in undermining the more vulnerable groups.

"I mean, I did go and see about the welders' counts being re-timed. But what answer did I get? Well they do it on the twilight'. And then I find out that the twilight are doing 4 hourly counts, but they'm working 4 and a quarter because they're starting before the shift starts! Yes! And I was very annoyed about it last Friday. He told me as they was doing good counts, and I mean, a couple of times he has shown me the cards, of what the twilight's doing. And then I find out as they're starting 20 minutes before the shift starts". Sarah (Press Shop) (65)

"I had two Asians - worked through their dinner time - so I had to go and stop them. They haven't done it since.

Another, because they're members on trial, was working hell-for-leather, and working in her break. So I had to put a stop to that as well". Pip (Sub-Assembly) (66)

Desperation might also manifest, in a different way:

"The superintendent sometimes comes to see me, to warn me about a case where a worker is over-booking. If it goes on - I go and warn the worker about it. She could be dismissed on the spot! The workers do it because they're pressurised to get out the count - they wouldn't do it for fraud". Pru (Sub-Assembly) (67)



The Disciplinary Offensive: Impact on the women workers.

We have argued that the impact of management's policy of control by the use of disciplinary action on the position of the women workers was both general and specific. A high disciplinary load was maintained by management taking disciplinary action on a systematic basis in three main areas: time-off, factory conduct and job performance. The overall effect of this was to sustain high levels of intimidation on the shopfloor generally, which undermined the development (and maintenance) of job controls by the women workers. And as we have seen, both job controls and employment security - which are, to some extent necessary conditions for each other - could be undermined directly by disciplinary action as well.

Since the social dimension of job controls are as significant as its technical aspects, we have argued that it is important to consider the implications of managerial strategies on workers' relationships with each other. We can consider this briefly by focusing on the problem of victimisation

VICTIMISATION

"Oh, that's bad! No but that's bad, not just because of my case. I've had experience of it, so I could speak on that fact. I was ... sort of didn't get on with my supervisor for 18 months and like if your face doesn't fit as they say in the factory way, - it's bad. Its really depressing! and I'm just one, out of probably quite a lot. There's quite a lot of girls, I know, that have been, you know, their face - like, a supervisor doesn't like a girl's face and she's ... you can't say victimisation because it's a very hard word to prove, but it is sort of in that way - they're using their coat against them".  
Edna (Final Assembly) (68)

The issue of victimisation was one of particular importance to the women workers. And it is clear that a workforce run down to low levels entailing a large number and frequency of moves, readily lent itself to this tactic on management's part: by means of selective imposition on groups of workers.

"We've got it all the time, I mean. You get people picked on, and all for nothing, and its generally to do with moving. I mean, people can be spiteful and catty can't they."  
Edna (Final Assembly) (69)

"I had a girl complain about being picked on. She was moved onto this line from another, but she was put on the same job she was doing before. But she said she'd been put on the right-hand side instead of the left-hand side she was used to and so she couldn't keep up. The forewoman only asked her to do her best, but she took no notice like ... so the forewoman asked me to have a word with her like. When I went up she just stormed out - she walked out. We stopped her at the door, like, you know, and she was accusing the supervision of picking on her and things like that you know, but she did come back to work". Barbara (Final Assembly) (70)

Indeed, selectivity on some kind of basis, was, in one sense, a condition of success or effectiveness. For example, on the question of doubling up.

"Now, I've always agreed - I 'ave got a few supervisors what go at it - a bull at a gate - they do. Some of 'em when they put this coat on - they're little 'itlers, you know. And I can't go round to 'em all and say, 'Calm down . This is 'ow you should be like...' Because they should know themselves, anyway. Because you've gotta be a bit of a psychologist - to be a supervisor. I mean, I can go up to one girl and say, 'DO that job'. I can go up to another one and say, 'DO that job' and she'll tell me to .... go. You know, you just 'ave to pick - who you can ask and who you should tell. Because we should always tell them - but the majority of the supervisors ask, you know, and you get more ... better results, that way".  
Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly) (71)

Selectivity, also, could be made to operate as a means of maximising from management's point of view, the impact of disciplinary action. (72)

"I think its just the fear of the warnings really with a good many. I mean, they've had ... you generally find management have had a lot of practice in people, and they know people and they know characters and they sort of know which one s to pick on to make them afraid and make the other ones - who're like, on the lines - realise, you know what I mean? They know those that are hard and think 'blow you mate - if I'm having time off, I'm having it, you'll have to sack me then'. You know - so it's sort of ... that's how they get the job isn't it? They know characters, they know which ones to pick". Edna (Final Assembly) (73)

Thus from the workers' point of view, the impact of management's disciplining fell unevenly and this could certainly have consequences for the kind of defensive action groups of workers might take on each other's behalf.

Moreover, the issues were not strictly clear cut, and apart from the problem of unevenness in its impact, managerial disciplining was also, to some degree, facilitated by the organisation of the labour process and the way the women related to each other within it. Thus, to the extent that disciplinary action addressed problems they experienced as workers, the importance of production continuity for instance, it facilitated management disciplining individuals, for example over poor performance. Then again.

"A girl complained because she came in two hours late. Someone had been put on her job. She didn't like the job she got instead. It caused a lot of bad feeling all round". Barbara (Final Assembly) (74)

One of the sources of this bad feeling was that the person who was moved onto the late-comer's job, considered she was being

punished too. And this view could be commonly found among workers moved to cover the jobs of absentees. They were being penalised for coming in to work, they were the ones who were being punished as a result of the other person's absence. There was a sense, of course, in which this may well have been true. Because movement of labour was used punitatively and lent itself to victimisation as well. Under these circumstances, the ability of the women workers to protect their employment security collectively, and to defend themselves against disciplinary action could all the more easily be undermined.

"We had one woman, she was never in on a Monday - came on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday - pay day. She had severe nervous asthma, home problems, diabetic son and other things, I imagine. And this was the reason for her absenteeism. Then she suddenly got ill and was away a long time. The women on the line were absolutely fed up with her being absent all the time. Because that woman would be replaced by a novice, and a novice will pull a line back ...."

(Did she have warnings for her absenteeism?)

"Oh, yes. Oh, persistent warnings, till she was coming up towards suspension. When she was about to be suspended, she started bringing doctor's notes in, and there was nothing you could do".  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (75)

Domination, degradation and intimidation are built in to employment relations under capitalism. The degree to which workers can protect themselves depends on their vulnerability in the labour market and within the individual firm. Wherever employers can succeed in undermining job security, they also increase this vulnerability and thus, workers' exposure to domination. To the extent, therefore, that its impact may result in undermining workers' employment security and job controls and thereby increase their

vulnerability, we might view the exercise of managerial powers in respect of disciplining workers directly, as important, strategically, as their exercise in say, the movement of capital, or the organisation of the labour process and the introduction of machinery.

DISCIPLINE AND THE CONTROL OF LABOUR

Footnotes

- (1) "Going into the office" i.e. accompanying members who were being disciplined appears to have constituted the most regular and frequent of the female representatives' duties.
- (2) Ref 14/S1: 480-518
- (3) In fact, as we have noted, output requirements in terms of market demand for the product fluctuated markedly, but this was not allowed to be reflected in fluctuating output requirements of the individual worker. This remained at maximum, and the number of workers was reduced instead.
- (4) Ref S1: 121-127
- (5) "But about the best laugh I had with him - I was just coming off shift at Old Hill, and I heard him shout to this man. 'What are you doing there?'. He replied 'I'm standing here waiting to be unloaded'. He says, 'Get your coat', he says, 'you'm sacked'. And when it come to the Put-to, the bloke didn't work there! He was one of the steel blokes from Hulbert's that had brought some steel in for him. 'Course he couldn't get into the warehouse for it to be unloaded at the time, it was full. He was waiting so as he could back in and get it unloaded. No matter - the bloke took his steel back and he wouldn't - nobody wouldn't come down until he went up and apologised. He had to go up and apologise in person to the staff .. He was a terrible man". Jim (Moulding Shop Serviceman) Ref 14.
- (6) Ref: 14
- (7) Ref 7/S1: 187-197
- (8) Ref 27/S2: 476-496
- (9) Ref 12/S: 234-238
- (10) See Appendix 1
- (11) Ref 11-12 /S1: 964-1024
- (12) Ref 26/S4: 606-628
- (13) Looking at some aspects of this procedure in more detail:

The supervisors' record-sheet noted that, "after every instance of lateness and absenteeism the employee must be warned verbally and reminded of the 1 month probationary period."

It asked for comments under each of the following headings: dexterity, speed, interest in work, adaptability, personality, co-operation. And added the requirement that:

"If an employee's speed is slow or co-operation is nil for example you must warn them verbally to this effect at the end of the first two weeks and remind them of the 1 month probationary period".

Finally, the immediate supervisor was asked:

"In your opinion should we continue to employ this employee?"

This decision was usually made by the end of the third week when the doubtful ones were warned of possible termination. They were finally told on the last Friday. Since all workers began paying union subscriptions by checkoff from their first wage packets, this period of probation had to be by agreement and the shop stewards were told that they could not intervene on matters concerning new workers during the four weeks. Usefully, from management's point of view, the period was not inflexible either:

(Is the month's trial long enough, would you say?)

"If it isn't ... if it isn't long enough - if its a marginal case, then we usually see the union and say, 'Look - this person's here for a month ... she's marginal - she's improved in the last week - her first 3 weeks were shocking - we are prepared to give her another fortnight or three weeks, by arrangement'. We MUST do it by arrangement, because the union's going to turn round and say, 'Well look - she's a member from now, and we're looking after her interests'. In which case you've got to go through the LONG procedure which exists for employees. So, we say, 'Look - we definitely ... she's on another fortnight - after that, we make a decision one way or the other. So, in that sense, we are a little flexible - particularly on very, very complicated jobs. If you have a very complicated job, then we try and be a little bit more lenient.' Barry White (Factory Manager) Ref: 10/S1: 298-313

The system devised, therefore, offered a means by which management's control problems could be eased - at least in their initial dealings with workers, by avoiding the disadvantages accruing to procedural disciplining - specifically the longer 'built-in' time periods, and possibility of having to negotiate decisions which were a consequence of official representation.

(14) Ref 1/S1: 000-017

(15) This was noted by the management consultants. Using the (far from comprehensive) statistics available, they found the highest levels of absenteeism on the main assembly lines - between 10% - 14% per day. Absenteeism in production and sub-assembly areas (Stourbridge figures only) was slightly lower, ranging from 6% - 10%. Inbucon (1977) p.24

(16) Ref 11/S1: 329-355

(17) Ref OH/19.1.77/O10.

(18) Ref 9/S1: 260-279 5.12.78,

(19) Ref 5/S1: 127-143

(20) " ... circumstances, the wage packet and life generally - seem to determine the absentee rate - rather than US". Barry White (quoted above).

- (21) Ref 4/S1: 100-121
- (22) Ref 26/S2: 310-322
- (23) Ref 9/S1: 285-291
- (24) Ref 22/S2: 817-833
- (25) Ref 13/S: 195 -
- (26) Ref 25/S2: 268-280
- (27) Ref 30/S3: 1002
- (28) Ref 15
- (29) Ref 22/S3: 198-220
- (30) Ref 13/S1: 431-470
- (31) Ref 29/S2: 438-452
- (32) Ref 32/S4: 81
- (33) Ref 39/S4: 72-89
- (34) Ref 16/S2: 385-396
- (35) Ref 10/S2: 324-370
- (36) Ref 19/S2: 545-561
- (37) Ref 7/S1: 361-379
- (38) Ref 40/S4: 109-127
- (39) Ref 23/S2: 931-964
- (40) Ref 7/S1: 551-555
- (41) Ref 12/S2: 120-123
- (42) Ref 9/S2: 122-135
- (43) Ref 7/S1: 552-572
- (44) Ref S2: 918-940. The instance of speed-up as a result of management's false promise (see above).
- (45) Ref 34/S3: 796-844
- (46) Ref OH 22/T3S1/150-188
- (47) Ref 11/S: 199-207
- (48) Ref 8/S1: 616-638
- (49) Ref 10/S1: 631-653
- (50) Ref 4/S1: 458-500



(51) Ref 28/S3: 359-373

(52) Ref 14/S2: 137-203

(53) Ref 14/S2: 784-790.

(54) Ref 30/S3: 468-474

(55) Against these attempts, the women stewards and membership became increasingly determined to hold to the previous 3-day custom and practice. The union officials, however, tried to maintain adherence to the new absenteeism agreement, even after the 12 month 'trial' had expired. Management took advantage of the confusion and lee-way which resulted. Different rules were maintained in different sections and changed according to the prevailing balance of power. The overall significance of the issue of disciplining time-off as a focus of struggle - a moving battle line between management and the women workers is signified in the factory manager's statement:

" ... the union (members) want it loosened off and we want it tightened - and it sort of waves backwards and forwards all the time". Barry White (Factory Manager). 10/S1: 313-329.

(56) Ref 8-9/S1: 457-476

(57) Ref 15/S1: 356-386

(58) Ref 22/S3: 652-719

(59) Ref 13/S2: 342-367

(60) Ref 12/S1: 997-1024

(61) Ref 7-8/S1: 792-823

(62) Ref 4/S1: 209-220

(63) Ref 19/S1: 574-595

(64) Ref 6/S1: 475-493

(65) Ref 18/S2: 260-270

(66) Ref 17/S2: 570-580

(67) Ref 12/S2: 480

(68) Ref 7/S1: 422-440 and 14/S2: 209-214

(69) Ref 15/S: 386-393

(70) Ref 19/S2: 180-200

(71) Ref 38/S4: 317-365

(72) For these reasons, and in recognition of the seriousness of the impact of victimisation on individuals and groups many of the shop stewards said they were interested in the possibility of becoming supervisors themselves. "I may be, yes. Why would I be interested? To treat the women more fairly". Sally Ref 7/S1: 530.  
Edna had her own experience of being victimised to draw on:

"I think it's because the supervisor doesn't take to a person and she can use her coat. That's why, as I say, if you're a fair-minded person, then I reckon you can do a damn good job, because if you're fair minded, you don't take parts like that do you?" Edna (Final Assembly) Ref: 14/S2: 214-224.

But Lorna had a less idealistic view:

"They use their coats against the shop stewards. I couldn't be like they are - if your face don't fit, they just keep moving you - and I couldn't do it. Everybody'd be the same to me". Lorna (Final Assembly) Ref 4/S1: 426-443.

(73) Ref 18/S2: 839-844

(74) Ref 20/S2: 218-234

(75) Ref 44/S6: 831-903.

CHAPTER 7 THE PAYMENT SYSTEM

In this chapter the payment system, ever an important adjunct of employers' control, is examined in terms of identifying features which tended to facilitate management's production needs. These, as we have seen, included: a high degree of control over individuals' levels and continuity of output, full and intensive use of operators' time and constant vigilance to minimise all other production costs.

The company used a payment system which combined features of measured daywork and piecework bonus incentive; both of which required time study, on the basis of which a minimum output or count might be established for each job. The system, covering all production and assembly operations, covered therefore almost all the women shop-floor workers, but few of the men. ("Indirect" males and those filling skilled and/or supervisory grades were paid on time-rates).

Much has been written about the advantages and disadvantages to management regarding the use of different payment systems - and again the way they work in practice would seem to owe more to the prevailing complex of conditions, both general and specific, than to intrinsic features of the systems themselves.<sup>(1)</sup> Having said that, it was in precisely these terms that the Stourbridge factory manager explained his preference clearly. The context of this being management's most crucial task, to constantly maintain output throughout the factory at the levels required.

"I was the biggest advocate for measured day work at one time, and I went to a lot of trouble to go into it and ... One thing, in organising a factory of this size - you've got to have control. Now, if you've got measured day work - you've supposedly got control by having a certain level of output for a certain level of payment. But, you have not got the discipline of piecework, to give you the control you need.

Now, I don't mean control from the point of view of getting the output. But if you put a series of operators on a job, and you say, 'Right, what level of performance will I expect for that job?' And you say, 'Right, I'll expect a 90 performance -

that's what we load the sub-assemblies at, about a 90 performance ... You're going to get some low operatives, and you're going to get some high operatives. But on balance, with the effort they're putting in, its going to give us an average of a 90 performance. So you can say, 'Right, I want 10 operators there at a 90 performance and give it to me'. Knowing that on average you're going to get that - albeit with absenteeism and everything else that you meet with. Now, if you put measured day work in, you've got to drive those operators all the time - to get that level of output. Because, you've got to have some motivation for them. Now, it isn't a question of the output you're looking for, it's the balance within the factory. Because if you have one section prepared to work without any ... er, direct drive, its only their own self-motivation - then you're going to have a much more level ... static level of production. And you DO if you have a set of operators who've got to get a level and reach it before they go and have their dinner. In other words, you are using ... you tend to use piece work as a method to control the quantities passing through the factory." (So you need different quantities in different areas, so you need flexibility ...)

"A tremendous amount of control, to get what you want at the right time."

"Under M.D.W. you stipulate an output, then you have to get it. Under piecework: we put the number of operators on a section at the certain level of performance, knowing that - under reasonable piecework conditions - they will supply what we want. I mean, after all B.L's efforts at getting day-work in... And only last year they were considering going back to piece work - simply because it gives you a tremendous amount of control. Not tyrannical control. Don't think I'm one of the old stagers that says, 'You want to get the whip out, and whip them up! ' It isn't a question of that. It gives you the motivation to get the operatives working. And it can KEEP them working, and they've got a direct return for the effort they're putting in."

Barry White (Factory Manager). (2)

The rhetoric usually associated with payment by results, of positive incentive and self motivation, are found here. But it will soon be clear that, in the context of BSR's production policy, the piecework system worked rather differently, and the payment system as a whole offered management rather more than this.

The new piecework "incentive" scheme based on performance levels was put in to cover most production and assembly workers in 1971-72:

"And then, of course, you really had to sweat tears.

To begin with it was lovely. Nobody worried about us and the work was turned out far better than what it is now.

October-November 1972 it was changed - the union hadn't long been in - but some parts of the factory were already covered by performance levels. I was on packing the TD8's - used to be four in a box. They wanted 2,000 per day with a line of 20. This was 6-800 more than what we were doing before - to get the basic day-work rate! I can remember that very clearly. (Did the people object?) Well they did! I can remember them leaving left right and centre". (3)  
Pip (Sub-Assembly).

Previous to this, payment had largely been by hourly rate with basic piecework in some areas. The new system, as is clear, allowed systematic speed-up through the setting of 'minimum' performance levels throughout the factory. The incentive element, seeming to offer some recompense for this, presumably eased the introduction of the new system and encouraged some initial high counts.

In this chapter we look at some of the problems arising from management attempting to get the workers, not only to attain high levels of output demanded, but also to sustain these. In the first two sections, we can see that management did not rely on the system of payment to achieve either.

The final section looks at the payment system in the broader context of management's production strategy relating to the minimisation of costs. It can be seen that these not only derive from labour but also the use of materials and machinery. Moreover, management itself must also be viewed as a cost. We are proposing that the

organisation of the labour process at BSR was potentially expensive in managerial terms, because of the high degree of external control and organisation it required. We look at how the payment system facilitated these and other costs being deferred by the employer to be borne by the workforce instead, i.e. to be (re)distributed downwards.

While, in this chapter, we are able to point to many ways in which the payment system could be used to facilitate management's aims, we cannot, again, assume that it was necessarily effective or successful in practice. As we have noted in relation to management's production policy as a whole, the degree to which it might be effectively applied would be bound to vary. It is important, however, to identify such aspects of managerial strategy and practice because of the implications from the point of view of the workforce. These practices structure the workers' experience of the labour process and production relationships, and to a great extent specify both the nature and degree of the problems that arise. Thus to the extent that managerial practices differ in relation to different groups in the workforce, so also are the problems and interests of these groups differentiated. Here, we continue to focus on the position of the women workers, and note again, that as a consequence of the sexual division of labour, their experiences differed in many respects from those of the men.

Finally, since most of the problems and implications arising for the women workers are covered in more detail elsewhere, this chapter is not structured in two parts.

### Earnings and Effort

One of the most striking features of the piecework bonus system was its complexity. Nora's husband, who did not work for BSR, was an experienced and active trade unionist. He had been forced to agree:

"You see - although I'd always had me counts, I'd never been sort of interested before I was a shop steward. I just had me wages and just looked at my slip - that was it. But when I came to be a shop steward, I was looking at it, and my husband says - 'well, how do they pay you'. I said, 'I haven't the foggiest idea ..' He says 'What ! you've been working there nearly nine years and you don't know however they've paid you?' I said, 'No. No, as long as I've had me wages, I've been quite contented'. He says 'well', he says, 'serves you right if they've done you'. He says, 'Explain some of the things to me and I'll see if I can find out how they work it'. Well I explained and he says, 'There's no sense to it! I can't find out how they pay you at all'"  
Nora (Final Assembly). (4)

The system was based on performance levels derived from standard minute job values, and a bonus of 12½ pence per point per 40 hours was paid for performances above the day work rate (minimum earnings level). The difference between a 66 performance (the minimum) and 100 performance (rarely exceeded) over 40 hours was worth £4.25. (5) Two thirds of all hourly paid workers were paid under this "incentive" scheme. But since self-motivation, other things being equal, would require a sense of how output related to pay, this was clearly not a design feature of the system - rather the opposite in fact. This relationship was so obscure that many of the workers did not consider it piecework at all.

"Everybody is confused actually. We don't know how we are paid, but it isn't piecework, I can assure you, because if it was piecework, they'd think they were on a banana boat! Piecework is so much a gross, and when that gross is done you can think - well I've earned my money, go home and do what you want. But

when its performance rate - you've got to do so many more, for the day rate."  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (6)

Even though workers were given a slip to sign midweek, showing their wages due at the end of the week (based on calculations from their job cards of the previous week) for most workers - especially those in teams whose "performance" depended on the number of women in the group - the system remained largely impenetrable:

(Do you have queries over the count very often?)

"Yes, a lot of the girls you know, they say 'Oh I'm not working this fast for this sort of money, or this performance'. And they want me to find out about it all. ... But, when it's explained to you, the count is right - you've just had an extra girl come to work that day and you've got to pay her for doing that - extra to pay her, you know. And a pass out, if someone goes, well you've got to pay them up till they've gone and when they've gone your performance can go up - for doing the same sort of thing, because she'd gone out -but I don't know how they work that bit! They all come into consideration, pass outs and everything, you know".

(How often do you get a query like that?)

"I've got an awkward girl on my line, she'd send me up every week". Barbara (Final Assembly). (7)

In this case, the system was incomprehensible without such information as the output for a given number of operators at each performance level. For the majority of workers it would seem that the piecework payment system remained "unworkable" because it was impossible to establish how the job value related to the performance level and how the performance level related to the count or output required. Nor did management readily provide the information:

"We went to them about our performances and the only reply we could get, every time I asked him a question, was 'you're just not doing enough and that's it'."



(What were you trying to find out?)

"Our performance rates. What percentage of units we had to do to get a performance like. I asked him for the count, to show the women. I went to ask how many they would have to do to get 100 performance - I

know you've got to allow for absenteeism and things like that, but he kept saying 'you're not doing enough, you're not doing enough'. And he wouldn't - he showed me the count for what they had done (an 87) but he wouldn't give me the count to show the women".  
Barbara (Final Assembly) (8)

But it was not surprising that the links between job values output, and performance levels, remained obscure to the workers since they had been manipulated by management, not only in the interests of cheapness, but also according to a notion of "equability". As the factory manager of Stourbridge explained:

"Stourbridge performances tend to be much lower than the scales in the other factories".  
(Why is that?) "We just keep them down there. By nature of the fact that we ... You see, you've got to keep the performance levels equable throughout the factory. Because if you get one section earning very high performances and the other section earning very low performances, you get friction. So, if you keep the performances running about the same throughout the factory, then you've got much more equable labour conditions. This is again, you come back to (the question)...

Why is Stourbridge so much better organised than the other factories - why don't we have so many problems? Because we spend so much time .. I'm not blowing my own trumpet or the trumpet for the management, - this is the way we work, this is the way we work as a team. If somebody's got a high performance on one section, he knows, - for his own salvation - you see, each manager is in charge of a fairly large area, therefore, he is likely to have high and low performances within that same area - therefore, its in his interest to say, knock the high performances down and bring the low ones up - because (otherwise) he is going to have problems in his own area. So not so much relating between area and area, as between section and section, if you know what I mean. Its in his own vested interest to make sure that he keeps the performances to an equable level".  
(So, overall at Stourbridge ...?) "We tend to keep the performances down. Not deliberately to curtail wages - but it keeps the balance".  
Barry White (Factory Manager) (9)

One of the most important consequences of obscuring the relation between job value, performance and output, was the increased "flexibility" it gave management regarding speed-up.

"BSR's abusing the operators, raising the count. They require the same count for the new unit as the standard one - they did 240 an hour for 110 performance for the day. The new unit has a higher value but they're still expecting 240 - and the operators are only getting a 96 performance.

All the lines are the same now. They've gradually put the counts up, even if its the same value unit. You do the same count, but get a lower performance ... and you'll find, if only the girls would look round, each time they have a rise - the count creeps up"  
Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly) (10)

However, setting levels of output is one thing, attaining it may be quite another. BSR's management could not, and did not, rely on "carrot" principles of motivation alone. Quite a large number of jobs carried no "incentive" element at all. Either because they were paid at a fixed performance (e.g. 85 performance on moulding machines), or they were so called "no value" jobs, which only carried a (low) standard day-rate. On all such "non-incentive" jobs the women had to produce a stipulated count within the time allowed and they were disciplined when they failed to do so. However, bonus workers were also disciplined if they failed to meet the minimum performance level required to earn the standard day-rate. And in practice, they were disciplined too, for failing to reach the expected (albeit bonus-carrying) levels of performance as well .

(Low performances?)

"This is a bit of a problem. This is where we set a level of performance which we consider to be reasonable - and they don't meet this performance, and they're taken through procedure. It's a very very long time since we sacked anybody for it - but we get them right close, and usually they decide that ...

you know, to ... be a little bit wiser and do a little bit more work, and eventually, they don't get sacked." Barry White (Factory Manager) (11)

#### Incentive and Disincentive

The need to take disciplinary action with regard to performance levels - as often as not, against bonus workers - suggests some basic limitations of this "incentive" scheme. The required levels of output may have been set too high, and/or the incentive pay, too low to call forth the extra effort. On the other hand, the women workers may have been particularly unresponsive to monetary incentives. Although difficult to disentangle, something of all of those would seem to have been pertinent here.

Looking at the first aspect; it is clear that management demanded very high levels of output throughout the factory. And some areas were particularly notorious in this respect. On the leads section for example, where the work involved the manipulation of fine wires - even the fastest workers could barely reach the minimum earnings level (the consultants were drawn to comment here that the time-values seemed "counter productive because there is a temptation to stop trying". (12)).

With regard to the second point, the low level of incentive pay, it was certainly true that basic pay had been allowed to rise at a much faster rate (partly under the impact of "equal pay" rises) and that the incentive element, therefore, formed a small and relatively declining portion of the wage. The fact that bonus pay, at the rate of 12½p per point per 40 hours had remained unchanged since it was first introduced at half-a-crown, says even more, perhaps about the low level of importance, in terms of

management's production strategy, of "positive incentive" or "motivation". Indeed "lack of incentive" was not identified as a possible reason for the persistently flat or falling performance levels, until 1977-8, when the bonus pay rate was increased to 13½p per point - for performances over 100. (Unattainable in most areas).

The area where "sticky" performance levels were most often identified at this time was in final assembly - on the main lines. And it is difficult to separate out a number of possible reasons for this. In the first place the incentive element may, indeed, have been perceived as insufficient, thus by dropping the rate of output, (as they did, deliberately in "go-slows" e.g. 1977-8), the women realised they lost very little money and "chose" a slower pace. Secondly, workers on the main lines were possibly subjected to greater fluctuations - periods of intense pace, for example, broken by waiting-time due to shortage of parts - than workers on other sections. And, so, their response in terms of levelling their effort, may have been more marked. Finally, the lines were womanned by younger workers who, it was widely believed, were less responsive to the incentive payments altogether. Management frequently voiced this opinion:

"I can remember many years ago, when the main lines were running 95, 100 performances, because they were all married women, who came solely for one purpose, only, to earn money. And they earned money! And now you tend to have the younger girls on the lines ...

... Now, the younger girls today, don't seem to have the desire, their wages are higher anyway, therefore a lot of them just don't know .. the youngsters, the teenagers - certainly - just don't know what to do with their money ... They're just not interested - money's of no importance whatsoever to them".  
Barry White (Factory Manager) (13).

Overall, given the high basic levels of output demanded, it would seem that, in terms of controlling this, the most useful "motivational" features of the piecework system revolved less around its positive incentives as its negative ones. Clearly, scope for the former would always be strictly limited in any case. The degree of management control over production was such that they could not permit workers themselves to either set a level of output or vary it much - down or up. Piecework payment, varying with output, provided a "negative incentive" because "bonus" workers would find that, in addition to being disciplined for not "making the count", they lost money as well (with the lower output).

For management then, the "bonus" system in fact, added a very important "negative incentive" or sanction to back up direct driving, because neither the latter, nor "positive incentives" could be relied on to maintain required levels of output, even if workers could be incited or driven to reach them. (15) For this reason if no other, the concept of "motivation" in respect of payment systems needs examination.

#### Deferring costs

So far, discussion of the payment system has focussed on the implications for workers' activity or application to production, in a direct sense. Of course, whatever impact a payment system has on output, is intimately related to the question of costs. But overall cost control requires a much wider sphere of vigilance on the part of management, and calls on other attributes of a payment system which should not be ignored. Broadly speaking, these enable production costs to be deferred onto labour, and in this respect three areas are of particular relevance, namely: labour costs, materials costs and

management control costs. The payment system contained arrangements, for example: regarding operators' training and job allocation, waiting time, bad parts and rejects, which enabled management to "defer" a large part of these three cost areas onto the workforce.

#### LABOUR COSTS

When new workers first arrived they were put on a month's trial. Shown the job by supervision, they learnt it sitting "next-to-Nellie" whose own output on any team job, could be significantly affected, as would that of the group as a whole. For this reason the company had agreed "to pay new starters' wages" rather than have them "paid out of the group's earnings". This meant that the newcomer was ignored in calculating the group's performance (and therefore, pay) level - which would otherwise take both output and the total number involved into account. While this system might not be entirely satisfactory as far as the group was concerned, it was better than nothing. Once the month's trial was over, however, the operative was considered fully trained but in practice this was far from the case. "Training" was all about picking up speed and at BSR "no job was yours", so a "fully-trained" operative would have to be "inter-changeable" to the fullest extent required. Training had, therefore, to be resumed with every new task an operator was allocated, and these costs were entirely borne by the group, (or, on an individual job, by the individual operator). After many years' struggle the women had finally got an agreement that they could be paid their average earnings (for a maximum of 4 weeks) if they were permanently moved onto another job. But this proved difficult to enforce and afforded little effective protection against their losing money through allocation to lower-paying

jobs or lower pay in "training" periods. Management's free-hand regarding job allocation in conjunction with the group "bonus" scheme meant that operators could also be "made to pay" the costs of "under-utilised" labour. Labour in general was very intensively used - the main expedient being to run with a constant shortage. On occasion a section might be temporarily dispensable to management, but it was useful to have these workers "on ice" (or perhaps, to force them to leave). Either way, if they were not required the company did not want to pay for them.

"A few weeks ago they brought women from upstairs and put them on our line over here. They came and said we've got some more women coming on your line - and we had about 4. Well, these women have got to be paid out of the money off that line. And that did pull our wages down. And they did get a little bit aggressive about that".  
Jenny (Final Assembly) (16)

In order to maintain the same performance and therefore, pay level, the whole line would have had to produce another three units per hour for each extra person put on. By no means an automatic result from having them there.

"They put extra bodies on - therefore a little job had to be found for them to do. So some of them were doing little or nothing, and some of them were really working hard - and that is where the aggression comes in".  
Jenny (Final Assembly) (17).

Unless they can achieve this extra (and for all - faster,) output, the whole line is made to pay, with their lower wages, the cost of the "under-utilised" labour - which otherwise the company would directly bear.

#### THE COSTS OF MANAGEMENT AND MATERIALS

An operator's output could be seriously affected if there was a shortage of parts or materials, or if those they had to work with were "bad". Apart from increasing the pressure and stress of the work generally, those on bonus would, of course also lose money as a result of both. This was because rejects were not included in the workers' count at all, and waiting time was only paid on those occasions agreed to by management and then, at the minimum day-rate. This situation meant that the workforce was highly dependent on "good management" in the sense of a well co-ordinated flow of components uninterrupted and of consistent standard.

As we have already noted, to the extent that such methods of organising the labour process, which entail a high degree of fragmentation, do succeed in reducing the workers' use of discretion regarding their own activities, they may increase the scope of management's control. But it is also true that such methods, multiplying the number of interdependent elements to be organised and co-ordinated "from above" also increase, perhaps to an even larger degree, <sup>(18)</sup> the need for management control over the labour process.

At the Stourbridge factory this was especially true because a much greater variety of models was produced there. <sup>(19)</sup>

more

"We have a/complex production pattern than other factories and therefore have to be more organised. I can give you an example: Old Hill run a maximum 2 main plates - Stourbridge run 6 ...  
.... whichever aspect you look at, because of the variety of the end product, there's variety right through the factory ... Old Hill makes 3 or 4 varieties of sub-plates, we make 15."



"Now, you can't run a factory like that unless it is well organised, because it would just be complete and utter chaos. So, it is force of circumstances which force us to be organised. This is the strength of Stourbridge - it's very, very well organised".  
Barry White (Factory Manager) (2).

But there are, as might be expected, two sides to the story:

"They say, oh blimey, we've got too many of them, we shall have to take the girls off them, and put them on something else! This has happened continually on the hinge section for a start. They've had that many of the different hinges to the pick-up arms - they've never had enough pick-up arms though. I've known it when they've had to hide them! Because they've had too much stock. Yes, well the superintendent dared not let Smith know - that's how the place is run".  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (21).

With pressure on space "one of the best disciplines you've got" (Barry White - Factory Manager) - not more than a day's stock was kept of most components, so that output had to be closely controlled and co-ordinated to ensure that every piece was available for assembly in the right quantity.

"We depend on everybody else in the factory. Now we're not getting the parts - we could be waiting an hour. Well we waited 42 minutes today for parts. And I mean, when you're waiting for parts and things like this you know, it drops your performance down". (So you don't get much money?) "You get a waiting time, but it's not much. I mean if you've been slogging your heart out all morning, and then for the last hour been stopped for parts - well, what's the point? You've just killed yourself off, and yet you've got no money! You see, this often happens ... that is very frustrating, I think this is where a lot of arguments flare up". Edna (Final Assembly) (22)

Loss of earnings due to waiting-time was one of the most common complaints - in particular from the women on final assembly. But the operators should not simply be viewed as "paying" for management's failures - that is, bearing what would otherwise <sup>have</sup> been the higher costs for management of organising a minutely sub-divided labour process. And, certainly, the management side was run with minimal

personnel and equipment. The women did, however, also lose money as a result of management's deliberate policy to use all labour and machinery intensively. Operators queued for main-plates because there was only one press on the type required, instead of two. It was not just the flow of parts and materials which was important to the workers - their quality was an equally significant problem.

"Like - cups on the rivetting. The cups are covered with scrap so you have to keep clearing the (press) table off. I've tried to see if they could send cleaner parts, but they say no! .. It takes longer - so you lose (money)".  
Sarah (Press shop) (23).

On the main lines, bad parts were a particularly strong cause for complaint:

"It's one of the worst problems on the lines at the moment. The lines suffer, your performance goes down and if you're compensated, it's not enough - and you still have to do repairs".  
Ethel (Final Assembly) (24).

Under the payment system whereby only good parts could be counted, neither work produced from poor raw materials or basic components nor that assembled incorporating bad parts, would be paid for. On the final assembly lines, only the units which were packed were included in the count. Occasionally, if there <sup>were</sup> a very large number of rejects, a form of compensation may be agreed:

(How are you compensated?)

"We had one really bad day - they're all bad but this one was worse. He paid us an average of the previous four days and cancelled that day's count. It didn't work out to very much because the other four weren't brilliant either - I couldn't tell you how they are supposed to compensate you .. .  
(Do they have a system?) "I think it's just how they feel". Ethel (Final Assembly) (25)

"If you've got 60 - 70 on the floor, you fetch the superintendent and he will allow them to be paid on the previous days performance. But if they go down to test and they're going backwards and forwards from the test, and you haven't got them on the floor and the girls don't come down and tell you till the next day - then you don't get paid, because you've got nothing to complain with. You have to show them the bad components. There's two sides of test - if parts need replacing, they're sent to breakdown and repair, then back to test again - sometimes test can have them 7 or 8 times. But until the unit is passed - you get no payment."  
Eunice (Final Assembly) (26).

The system of payment plus the arbitrary nature of compensation combined to ensure that operators could be made to bear the cost of management's strategy to cut labour and materials' costs. Bad parts might be due to the shortage of setters and/or inspectors, particular for example on automatic machinery, such as the presses, turning out components at a rate of anything from sixty to a couple of hundred per minute. They only needed to be a fraction out, to cause innumerable problems in assembly. Bad parts might also result from deliberate efforts to allay the cost of materials:

(What are the main bad parts that you get?)

"Sub-plates. I've had bad jockeys this week".

(What was the reason for the bad jockeys?)

"Well, if you have a bad part you break it down - well from the state I've had some this morning, and I should imagine they're using some of the breakdown parts to make good ones back up. I don't know why they do it, because they don't get through - they only get thrown back out. I don't know why they do it, it just keeps repeating itself you know, just keeps going back as a breakdown and coming back. And if it doesn't get packed, they don't get paid".  
Barbara (Final Assembly) (27).

As the organisation of work and the payment system was set up, the workers would absorb the costs, in terms of stress and finance,

of both management's intended policy - "to run a tight ship", along with its unintended, but increasingly likely - consequences of breakdown. Deferment of such costs was much facilitated by the discretionary nature of all "non-production" payments.

There was another respect in which the workforce might be considered to pay management costs which has already been taken up in relation to work intensification. (28) This concerned the use of bad parts - which management put into assembly in periods of low demand, as a means of reducing output, cutting wages, allaying the costs of materials and, most importantly, maintaining the same pace of work. It was considered vital that even when demand was slack, the pace should never be allowed to drop - because, it was judged, it could never be picked up again. This practice was, of course, facilitated by the same features of the payment system mentioned above.

#### Conclusions

In this section the payment system has been scrutinised in order to identify those features which tended to facilitate management needs - in particular, control over workers' output and minimisation of production costs. On the face of it, the company operated on the basis of a piecework bonus system, but the advantages management derived from this lay somewhat less with the commonly attributed features of piecework schemes. This seems to indicate the need to view any payment system in the context of management's broader production strategy, and also to take into consideration other important contingency areas which (apart from workers' activity alone), nevertheless, touch on costs, output and earnings in a significant way.

Ultimately, since certain of the aspects which have been outlined might have helped to further management's aims, they could not, of themselves, guarantee these results. The utility of the payment system, from management's point of view, depended finally, on their control over the labour process and over information (particularly regarding the relationship between pay and output). It also depended on the control exercised directly, over the workers themselves. The importance of this has already been made apparent. Despite the rhetoric of self-motivation, it is clear that the role of incentive in the payment system was minimal, with low levels of bonus pay and scarcely attainable levels of output. The piecework scheme thus appears to have been more significant from the point of view of its "negative incentives" than its positive ones. However, it is clear that the payment system as a whole could not be relied upon to sustain the consistently high levels of output required, and that these were underpinned by more direct negative sanctions applied to the workforce by management. While we have noted that this was a labour process which demanded a high degree of control by management for its effectivity, we now see that it demanded also, a high degree of direct control over the workers themselves. In the following chapter we go on to examine some of the ways this was applied and with what effect.

CHAPTER 7

PAYMENT SYSTEM

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) See, for example, Purcell (1979) and Cliff (1970)
- (2) Ref 15/S1: 531-580
- (3) Ref 4/S1: 248-312
- (4) Ref 15/S2: 296-358
- (5)  $100-66 = 34 \times 12\frac{1}{2}p = £4.25$
- (6) Ref 4/S1: 248-312
- (7) Ref 14/S1: 814-852
- (8) Ref 8/S1: 420-470
- (9) Ref 14/S1: 470-518
- (10) Ref 5/S1: 393-457. 31.10.1978
- (11) Ref 10/S1: 291-298
- (12) Inbucon (1977) p.XI-3
- (13) Ref 14/S1: 480-518
- (14) There is little "incentive" to produce more if it is impossible.
- (15) This aspect of 'negative incentive' was further reinforced by the fact that some jobs were 'allowed' to pay better than others and the workers on these strove not to be moved off them.
- (16) Ref 28/S2: 576-610
- (17) Ref 28/S2: 576-610
- (18) Since workers discretion is often (perhaps more often than not?) used to sustain production continuity etc. see Nichols (1973)
- (19) The October 1977 output of 280,714 units from Stourbridge comprised 25 different types; the Old Hill total of 276,294 units consisted of 4 models and 2 different types were made at Waterfall Lane (output 33,810).
- (20) Ref 12/S1: 373-410 5.12.1978.
- (21) Ref 36/S3: 950-971 5.12.1978
- (22) Ref 6/S1: 328-
- (23) Ref 15/S2: 61-73

- (24) Ref OH11/T2S1: 250-300
- (25) Ref OH11/T2S1: 300-310
- (26) Ref OH23/T3S1: 220-240
- (27) Ref 10-11/S1: 505-611
- (28) See above pp. 170 - 174

CHAPTER 8      MALE WORKERS: THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE WOMEN  
WORKERS AND THEIR PROBLEMS.

Having set out in the previous chapters, the position of the women workers in the system of production, we now look at how the men at BSR stood in relation to the women, and how they viewed the women workers' problems and experiences. As we noted in Chapter 1, the mainstream industrial relations literature is a little hazy on the importance of sex-based differences. Here we are going to consider how important and relevant these differences are.

In a general sense we aim to show that the male workers' views of the women workers and their problems tended to be of a particular kind and had a number of common themes. These derived from the fundamental relationship of inequality prevailing between the sexes and were shaped by the ideology which is both its expression and practice. We would argue that a number of serious distortions are produced as a result of this relationship and that these have a "mystificatory effect": one tendency being to render many important features of capitalist exploitation "invisible" when they are viewed in relation to women. The significance of what we conclude, is that these perspectives inform both the understanding and responses of male workers, at an individual and collective level, to women workers' position and problems in employment. Both these responses and the understanding must therefore be viewed as problematic.

As the discussion in this chapter proceeds, points are made and examples illustrated by reference to individual opinions expressed by the male workers interviewed at BSR. The intention is not to suggest any blanket generalisations about "how all the men thought";



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The aim is, rather, to identify some distinctive aspects of those perspectives underlying their (individual) views, together with some distinctive points of contrast in their position and experience - as a means of specifying more closely the nature and shape of those sex-based differences of interest we are dealing with. Indeed, such sex-based differences can be located within every social institution and at any level, but we are focussing on just one point of production and section of the working class.

Even so, it is not possible to confine such a discussion of the implications and consequences of the sexual division of labour to the level of the workplace alone. Differences between men and women in terms of occupational experience and working relationships clearly do give rise to distinctive sets of interests within employment. But the shape of any resolution of these in terms of working class organisation and practice is patterned significantly by relationships prevailing between the sexes beyond the factory gates. We therefore need to see how the perspectives of the male workers at BSR on their own and the women's job interests were informed by the sexual division of labour both within the labour process and outside it.

The sexual division of labour assumes both general and specific forms within the two major spheres with which we are concerned - the private, and usually family-based household and social production (mediated by the labour market). A notable characteristic of both spheres is the tendency for men and women to live separate, or rather segregated lives. In quite crucial respects they can be said to occupy different worlds, engendering significantly different

experiences, problems and consciousness. This assertion of distinctiveness is here perhaps the more heavily stressed because it is being made against a dominant tendency to consider "the family" as an undifferentiated unit and "the wage worker" homogeneously male. Such a proclivity serves to hide both the existence and also surprising extent of sexual segregation, separation and differentiation of experience and interests within social institutions and classes - some of the implications of which we are concerned to draw out.

In order to do this, the concept "sexual division of labour" has, in this analysis, been broken down and two major axes of differentiation identified. The first of these is a differentiation by function or type of social activity engaging men and women, and the second is by an (unequal) distribution of power between them. Both dimensions entail a separation of interests and, though found in conjunction, these lines of separation are of a different order and need to be distinguished, if proper implications of their effects are to be drawn. <sup>(1)</sup>

Why is it important to examine the sources and implications of interest differentiation arising from the sexual division of labour? If we are concerned with the matter of interest representation in trade union structures, these issues could be crucial. Gordon was able to make such a point plainly - from a male point of view.

(Are there any ways a women shop steward could be better than a man or vice versa?)

"Well. Where are we with women's lib? I would basically believe that a good male shop steward could be better than a woman, because a male shop steward could probably understand, deal with a woman's problem as well as his own men. But I wouldn't say the same - that a woman could deal with a male problem."

(Why is that?)

"Well, the male preserve is still something that a woman doesn't finally understand, isn't it really? I mean, I think I've got more chance of understanding a woman's problem than she would, or her women, I would say, than many of them mine. Because we haven't had lib. in that ... we haven't had unisex, in that long to be completely, shall we say, integrated with each other's problems. So I'd say on balance, that I would have more chance of understanding her problems. Men have always dealt with women. And here, although through the numbers you've got more say 'for' women, than 'for' men, I would still say on the whole, that a good male shop steward possibly ...

(What aspects of what you call 'the male preserve' do you think it is hardest for a woman to understand?)

"Well let's face it, there are toolrooms and maintenance departments here".

(What is it about them which makes them difficult?)

"Well, women have never been, shall we say ... women have never been involved in those departments have they to that extent? ... Alright you could say, adversely - but even the sheer technicality of these departments, it's possibly - a man could go on the line and pick their problems up quicker than a woman off the line could go in and pick theirs up, because of the technical problems involved ..."  
Gordon (Storeman) (2). My emphasis.

It would not be incorrect to say that this chapter is a sustained argument against Gordon's assumption that he might have a greater chance of understanding a woman's problem in employment than she would, either his or her own. Although we are more especially concerned with exploring the nature of his, and other men's understanding, as this has had, and continues to have, significant implications for the representation of women workers' interests in male-dominated trade unions.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first we examine the position of men in relation to women in the home. We have already established the significance of domestic relationships for women's position in employment; what are the

implications for male workers? We find that dimensions of sexual inequality in the domestic/family sphere, for example greater freedom in terms of control over the disposition of personal time and scope for independent social activity plus a markedly different conception of women's relationship to the wage (in comparison with their own as bread-winners and property controllers), are all aspects which are likely to carry over to the workplace and have an impact - both attitudinal and material - on relationships between the sexes there. Moreover we can identify already a distinctively patterned "double standard" in the men's view of women as the sex fit for "degrading" work, which reflects the unequal power relationships within the household - and also outside it. This double standard also has the effect of "dehumanising" women and blocking generalisation from men's own experience by the utilisation of alternative criteria.

In the second part of this chapter we go on to look at some of the implications of sexual divisions in the labour market. We concentrate here on some distinctive aspects of job socialisation, and the nature of employment opportunities and experience, as these might influence male workers' material position in relation to women in the workplace itself. We would argue that sex-segregation, although associated with "women's jobs" is, in its practice, more thoroughgoing in male dominated occupations. And where men and women are employed together, they are likely to be divided along lines of authority and/or control. Such differences, together with contrasting experience of trade unionism, are likely to have an impact on the problems faced by male workers and also their responses to them. This differential experience can, of course, be expected to shape the men's perspectives on the position of the women workers. However, we also find their views are likely to be

strongly coloured by assumptions - such as the "fitness of women for drudgery", which will have a significant effect on the male workers' assessments. It would appear that many features of the kind of jobs women workers are employed to do, which are considered in themselves problematic, lose this status when women are the job-holders. So again we note how the utilisation of differential criteria might seriously distort awareness of important aspects of capitalist exploitation in general and the problems faced by women workers in particular.

The way that the men related to the women working at BSR is examined in the third part of this chapter. We have already pointed out that as a consequence of the sexual division of labour, men and women's position in and, therefore, experience of the labour process here, was different in a number of important respects: such as the way their labour was utilised, their jobs and authority relationships. And some of the implications of this separation and differentiation for the way the men evaluated the women's position are further explored here.

Similar lines of differentiation could, of course, be found in the ranks of the male workers. But taken overall, the contrasts with the women were significant in a number of respects. First, the extent that problems experienced by the women workers were not shared by the men; secondly, and related to this, the extent to which the male workers occupied less inhospitable ground for the maintenance/development of job controls - whatever their rank. Again, we might expect this differential experience to shape the men's perspectives on the position and problems of the women. However, when we examine their approach to two major problems which the women at BSR experienced, we find, again, that the men's perspectives were structured in ways which were quite distinctive.

And their patterning; the utilisation of "double standards"; the view of women workers as the problem; and the biological reductionism, cannot be seen as necessarily or wholly deriving from the male workers' experience in the labour process.

We therefore return to examine more closely the nature of the relationships between men and women at the workplace. Subsumed in common, within the relations of employment, we consider the impact of other sets of relationships between men and women, which mediate and are mediated by the first. We find that the lines of power inequality between the sexes structure all of these relationships systematically, and thus the differentiation of interest between the men and the women. In terms of the male workers' perceptions the mediations are complex, but the consequences are plain. Since the overall effect is to deny the basis of the women workers' problems in the relations of production and exploitation.

PART I : MEN AND WOMEN IN THE HOME

"I haven't got any home worries. I've got  
a very efficient wife".  
Bob (Serviceman, moulding shop, [two teenage  
children] (3)

We have already seen how the position of the women workers at BSR, their needs, problems and perspectives, cannot be understood without reference to their position in the home, because this shapes their employment experience to such a large degree. But what about male workers? It is clearly inadequate to assign such significance to the domestic sphere in relation to the female workforce alone, so in this section we look at some of the implications for the men.

Despite the spread of more "modern" attitudes and apparent proliferation of house-husbands, it is still true to say that the most important difference structuring the employment experience of both men and women springs from the sexual division of labour in the house, and the structures of power in family relationships.<sup>(4)</sup> The impact of unpaid domestic labour, child-care responsibilities and nurture of kin and spouse are of a very different order in the lives of men and women. The nature of this impingement and its consequences for women's behaviour and organisation at work is now more readily recognised;<sup>(5)</sup> and occasionally the implications of men's freedom from domestic ties is noted too.

But still the main focus of these discussions, i.e. the aspect which is problematised, is the impact of domestic responsibilities on the worker's relationship to his/her employer. We, on the other hand, are concerned to explore dimensions of workers' relationships with each other. And we are especially interested in the way that



the men at BSR related to and perceived the women - their position, their work and their problems. How were these relationships and perceptions shaped?

If the sexual division of labour in the household can be so readily identified as having important consequences for women's experience of employment, what then is its relevance for men? What are the implications of men's freedom from certain aspects of domestic life, their authority over women in the household, and their relatively greater social power outside it, for their position and relationships at the workplace? These questions are explored in the following section, where we attempt to draw out some implications for the way male workers' perceptions and interests were structured by their experience.

Looking at the accounts of the male workers interviewed, it is not difficult to discern a number of areas where their life circumstances differed materially from those of the women. The most striking contrast, as we might expect, can be found in the men's experience of domesticity. Not only are the differences - in terms of activity and functions - notable here, but also the separateness of many aspects of men and women's domestic life. Linked to this, and perhaps more crucially, we can see that this sexual division of labour is characterised by power inequality, with women subordinated to men.

Numerous consequences arise from the prevailing structure of domestic relationships which have implications extending well beyond the household. We identify three in particular: first there is the greater degree of control for men over their own personal time

which is consequent upon their relative freedom from domestic work responsibilities and personal caring; secondly, there is the extent of male control over family property; and thirdly the markedly greater scope and extent of men's independent social activity. Clearly, significant contrasts in all these areas must give rise to sets of problems and interests of a different order, not only between husbands and wives, but also between men and women as wage workers.

Domestic Relations: housework and personal caring

(Who does most of the housework at home. Is it your wife?)

"Well, I suppose she does most of it ... it just depends what kind of mood I'm in whether I do it or not - we share".

Terry (Maintenance Chargehand with four school-age children) (6)

"Oh well, my women see to all that (domestic arrangements) while I'm away. I've even trained them to cut the lawns."

Gordon (Storeman with one adult daughter) (7)

The way the sexual division of labour in the household is organised will show infinite variations of detail in practice. But it still remains possible to identify some general features, which have implications for men and women outside this sphere. First there is the point that an unequal distribution of domestic work and responsibilities will provide differing experiences of domestic life for husband and wife. And as a consequence, significant aspects of domesticity are not only diminished for the man, but frequently remain outside of their experience almost entirely. The clear lines of demarcation in Gordon's household, for instance, provide a basis for asserting the significance of

the separateness, as well as the difference in the experiences of men and women.

(When she was a baby were you involved in looking after your daughter - changing nappies and bathing her, things like that?)

"No - not really." (Did you want to?) "No, I'm not domesticated to that extent. No I've got a capable wife. If I go out to work - she looks after the ... the decision used to be clearer than it is now - since unisex and liberation coming in".

(Can you tell me about the household arrangements during the week, like - when you do the shopping and the washing etc?)

"My dear, I don't know a thing about what she does, what they do at home - that's their department and what I do at work is my department, and we never seem to ... there are three of us at home, we have an excellent arrangement. My daughter does all the wallpapering, inside. My wife does all the painting inside, and I do all the painting outside. Organisation, me! I mean if I get anyone in to do a job, carpenter, electrician - they ask me a question. I say 'look friend, I don't expect you to tell me how to do my job, and I've paid you to do a good job for me and so don't expect me to tell you how to do yours'. On that basis we agreed to run each other like that".

(Your daughter helps in house?) "Oh yes"  
(What does she do?) "Oh yes, she cuts my lawns for me. She's an excellent cook. Cooks my evening meal sometimes."

(Does she do any housework on a regular basis?)  
"Oh I don't think they've got it organised. One person organising in the household is enough - I want to organise everything that ...."

(Do you do any of the domestic jobs?) "No"  
(None) "No".  
Gordon (Storeman) (8)

Clearly, the unequal distribution of household labour underpins familiar and distinctive patterns of employment for men and women workers. And this is itself a consequence for each of the relative freedom from, or responsibility for, housework and personal caring. But as soon as we ask what determines this distributional pattern,

or what its further consequences may be, it is clear that this sexual division of labour in the household cannot be considered in its functional aspects alone. Nor can the domestic relationship as a whole be isolated from the broader context of unequal power relations between men and women in society generally.

The male breadwinner still largely expects to be serviced by the female in the home, and to wield personal authority over the household:

(What do you think about the fact that most domestic work is done by women?)

"Well, my own particular feeling is that the wife's place is to ... I married my wife to look after me, my children and my home. If I wanted a housekeeper, I would hire one. So, in return for her doing my cooking, my ironing, my washing, I provide her with sufficient money to run my home and have sufficient capital for environmental pleasure - the motor car etc. to be able to go out and enjoy life as much as possible on our particular income. I've no regrets about the way things have worked out. I'm very, very proud of the places I've seen and the friends we've made. Very proud indeed".

Michael (Carpenter) (9)

(Do you feel that boys should do things like ironing?)

"It is definitely very very useful indeed. There may come a time where ... he might be a batchelor that does his own ironing, unless he is fortunate enough to have his ladyfriend to live with him".

Michael (Carpenter) (10)

"Well, my eldest daughter's fifteen now, so I've made her take over the ironing".

Tony (Maintenance Chargehand) (11)

"Before my daughter came to stay - it was nothing for me to do all the washing up, prepare my own dinner, prepare my own snap for coming out ...."

Bob (Serviceman Moulding Shop) (12)

These comments do not just indicate the unequal division of domestic work. They show how the men considered that they had choices ("if I wanted a housekeeper, I would hire one"), and

exercised control over who did domestic work ("I've made her take over the ironing"). Such control is also implicit in the expectations that it is exceptional for men to do domestic work ("he might be a batchelor that does his own ironing") which can be resolved by women taking up their "natural" servicing role, thus relieving the men from this unusual position ("before my daughter came to stay").

Some of the implications of this aspect of power in the domestic relationship can be pursued by examining Ernie's account, as he was particularly prepared to discuss such matters. He was clearly proud of his wife and two young daughters. Kitty worked at BSR in the moulding department from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., fitting in housework and family care around these hours which extended well into the evening. In his frank assessment Ernie could see how he gained from the "traditional" division of labour.

(Do you think the fact that most domestic work is done by women is a 'good thing', 'bad thing', 'just natural' or what?)

"Well, I feel like saying custom and practice. I mean you just take it for granted that women do the domestic chores and all that. Is it a good thing or not? I'd say it was natural, whether its a good thing or not I don't know. It's possibly a good thing from my point of view - because the domestic work, they're menial tasks which I wouldn't like to become involved with you know. Well that's it - there can't be any interest in them can there, you know what I mean?".

Ernie (Maintenance Fitter - Deputy Covenor) (13)

Implicit in the view expressed is the notion that work which is considered (by men) to be menial and degrading is the "natural" province of women. Degradation of women by men is a consistent and in fact quite explicit aspect of our culture, even if it is not always clearly recognised. That it pervades close personal

relationships is not surprising, nor that it should have wider consequences in terms of the collective organisation of men and women. If women cannot be considered "human" in the same way as men - if they are "de-humanised" - then their situation in the home, in the workplace or anywhere else cannot be judged by the same standards or understood by men by criteria they might use in relation to themselves. (14)

We would argue that this "double standard", as well as the separation and differentiation of lived experience, are all manifestations of unequal power relationships. We have to note already, therefore, that this must have an impact on men's perceptions of women's position, problems and priorities in any other context.

Property Relations: male ownership, possession and control

One of the innumerable ways that the discrepancy in social power between the sexes is made manifest in the husband/wife relationship, is therefore, the pattern of sexually divided responsibilities in the household - where men have the power to command the personal services of women. This, we have suggested, has wider implications for the way men relate to women and for the way they perceive women's position. We are particularly interested to explore how these and other aspects of sexual inequality are relevant in the workplace. And in this respect there are two more features, also strongly apparent in the domestic relationship, which can be identified. These concern male/female differences in relation to control over the disposition of property, on the one hand, and over personal time, on the other.

Taking the question of property first, we can approach this by examining the way that the men and women workers at BSR expressed the purpose of their wages and also their relationship to family possessions. There were some interesting similarities and differences here.

For instance, there was a marked discrepancy in the way the wage-earning men and women interviewed referred to the disposition of their wages within their own households. All the workers at BSR were paid in cash at this time, but still the tendency was for males to refer to the use of their money for "capital" items like the house and car and paying the bills, while the females said their wage went on "current" expenditures like the weekly groceries, things for the children and "extras we would not have otherwise". In addition, when the males were asked about the disposition of their wives' wages (all except one had regular paid employment) they described a similar pattern.

However, such a coincidence of views on the different functions of men and women's wages was not repeated in terms of family possessions. While the men reinforced their view of themselves as the purchasers of the main household items by reference to themselves as house and property owners - viz "my house", "my car", etc - the women tended to refer to joint or family ownership - viz "our house", "our car" - unless specifically, and much more rarely, having their own.

Car use and "ownership" is a very interesting aspect of control over property in the family. Terry's case is probably quite common.

(If your wife didn't work, what sort of things would you have to do without?)

"The car would have to go straight away. Put it this way. Her money subsidises the car, quite honestly. It's the only luxury we have, in any respect like that"

Terry (Maintenance Chargehand) (15)

But it was by no means her car.

Terry's wife could not drive and, in fact, experienced considerable transport difficulties herself as a nurse on nights, who had to walk 1½ miles home after working an 11 hour shift.

On the other hand, Ernie's wife did use the car and "she pays half towards it". But their internal monetary arrangements ensured it remained his financial responsibility, and therefore under his "ownership". He gave her housekeeping money which she added to her own wage (£26) and spent on groceries. When they purchased the car and then the automatic washing machine, he took her contribution towards these out of the housekeeping he gave her. "You know, I only end up giving her about £3 per week now, like out of ...." (some £100). Thus it was "his" money which was actually spent on the "capital" items.

In such ways is the authority of status of the breadwinner maintained in terms of ownership and control over property and, thereby also, a demarcation maintained between men and women's relationship to the wage. Such distinctions, reflected in the sometimes highly complex financial arrangements between husband and wife, can be seen generalised in such persistent ideological notions as women's wages being "less important", the secondary wage or "pin-money". But the arrangements themselves indicate a reality of women's subordination through continued economic dependence which



it is not necessarily in men's interests to reverse.

Jenny, for example, took home £32 per week. Her husband paid all the bills and gave her £12 housekeeping money.

"I don't have a wage, but I have £12 off him for food ... and I don't get any more than that at all. Because he believes ... he said that a woman shouldn't go out to work to keep a man. So to give him his bit of independence, he gives me £12.

Then I put that with my money and the boys' money of course, and I sort of ... If we need a new carpet, I save. And I buy the carpet - save him that expense. I buy my own clothes - apart from gifts, he very rarely buys us anything."  
Jenny (Final Assembly) (16)

Personal Relations: Possession and control

The third aspect of the relationship between men and women in domestic life which seems to throw up marked discrepancies in experience, concerns the scope of independent activity and the degree of control exercised over their own free time. In terms of the amount of free time available, there were quite definite differences. From the discussion of the women's domestic commitments, it was fairly clear that none of the married women seemed to have any free time whatever. Moreover, when discussing their social life, hobbies and interests, only two women, one showing dogs and the other closely supporting her daughter's involvement in show-jumping, could discuss activities not directly related to their homes. And neither of these took place outside of family relations. Most hobbies then, comprised an extension of domestic tasks, particularly sewing and knitting - with attendance at the union branch meeting being the only occasion most of the women ever went out of the home "on their own".

In contrast to this, the men could produce an impressive list of hobbies and interests, and a social life which regularly took them outside of home and family (e.g. pub and sport).

When, however, these male workers were asked about their wives' activities, they were generally hard pressed for answers - and quickly returned to themselves:

(Does your wife have any hobbies or interests?)

"Family. Yes. Well I'm starting with a new interest for me, I used to hate gardening, but I like to grow my own vegetables and stuff and I've told a friend of mine who's in an allotment association to keep his eye out - because I've found a bit of fun in growing my own vegetables actually".

Terry (Maintenance Chargehand) (17)

"No, to be quite truthful I've never known my wife have a definite hobby, you know that? Funny you asked that question. Really my hobby was life, involvement, you know".

(When you were doing all your voluntary work what did your wife do?)

"Well, she was at home with the kids and that is another reason I packed the whole lot in - it affected my family".

Bob (Serviceman Moulding Shop) (18)

(How did you arrange it when the children were young?)

"We always arranged to have one person in to look after the children". [He went to Scouts twice a week - she stayed in.]

(Did she go out?)

"We got baby-sitters to go out together"

(Did she ever go out on her own?)

"I believe she did once go on an evening institute course to the swimming baths to learn to swim ..."

Michael (Carpenter) (19).

Why was there such a difference between the men and women?

Had the latter ever had an independent social life - at least, before having children? When both were asked about hobbies or interests

which had now been given up, the women interviewed could find answers (usually sports or dancing), as easily as the men - but their reasons for giving up were markedly different.

"I used to do ice-skating but I gave it up when I met my husband - because he couldn't skate and then he got fed up when I was having my lesson, and he was having to sit and watch. He just stopped coming with me, and that meant I was having to go on the bus - and then he'd moan because I wasn't ready when he was coming for me .... so I gave it up.

I used to go with friends every Sunday. And then we decided we'd have a lesson, you know. I didn't get very far ..."

(Would you have liked to have carried that on?)

"Yes, I would actually. I enjoyed doing that. But he didn't like it, because he couldn't do it. He kept falling over".

Barbara (Final Assembly) (20)

It appeared that the women most frequently abandoned all types of independent activity when they formed their marriage relationships, in particular their outdoor hobbies and their employment. Although this was hardly at all true of themselves, when the men were asked similar questions about their wives, they revealed much the same picture, and it is interesting to see their view of this and the way they recognised that marriage had seen the end of whatever independent activities their wives had been involved in.

(Was your wife working before you got married?)

"Yes, tailoress - she gave it up after the war.

(Was there any reason why she stopped?)

"No". (Did you want her to stop?). "Oh yes, I didn't want her to go to work.

(Did she want to stop?) "I think so, yes.... I may be old fashioned, but there we are".

(Did she have hobbies she's given up now?)

"I believe she used to be a good tennis player.

(When did she give that up?)

"Oh many years ago, when she met me".

Gordon (Storeman) (21)

(Did your wife work before she had children?)

"Yes, she was an invoice clerk in a personnel office".

(Did she mind giving up work at all?)

"No, no, no. Family first - a case of family first. I influenced her in no way - family started and that was it".

(Did she have hobbies in the past which she's given up?)

"Yes, athletics. She was good at running and jumping".

(When did she stop?)

"Oh gosh. I think the day we were married".

(Why was that?) "I don't know. I don't know at all. There was no apparent reason for it. She keeps pretty fit at the moment".

(Did she used to compete?). "Oh yes. She competed. We have proud prizes to prove it, on our dressing table".

(Did you try to get her to carry on?) "Oh, I'm always on about it. In fact, it seems to me that the more I carry on to her about what she's missed by not continuing it, she fights against me by determining not to continue with these things. She's happy, she's quite happy".

Michael (Carpenter) (22).

The limited nature of girls' activities compared with boys' and the further rapid decline in the independent activity of women - however voluntary - which is associated with men's possessive relationships and attempts to gain control, has long been expressed by women themselves. It is interesting to note Ernie's account of this process perpetrated against his wife. In the course of it, he refers to an occasion when they had taken up jogging together for one evening in the week. When the evenings grew light, his wife refused to continue as she felt too embarrassed. It is clear that women are inhibited in their activities by strong social as well as personal controls. (23)

(Does your wife have any hobbies?)

"Actually, I might be at fault here. I would probably resent her having a hobby because you know I'd think of it as taking her away from me like. Once again, I'm being perfectly honest, like I have been all the way through with you - I think she would possibly like a hobby on her own, even if it was a matter of going to keep-fit evening class or something like that. And I probably wouldn't help her. I wouldn't say - oh yes, that'd be a great idea, you know. I'd probably be ... what's it - by my silence about it like. You know what I mean? I'd possibly like her to have hobbies, but I'd like to be involved with her. I s'pose jealousy comes into it, or something. I probably would resent her having something on her own that would take her away from me, you know".

(Did she used to have her own interests?)

"Well, she loves dancing. She loves dancing even now like. We go to dances. I possibly don't like dancing as much as she does... And she used to enjoy jogging except when the embarrassment thing came in - when the light nights came in ..."

(Does she go out in the evening during the week?)

"Not as a regular pattern. If there's some particular women's thing organised - a trip or night out ... well when I say I let her go, don't get the wrong impression, she goes and I don't mind her going like, I trust her. But there isn't any actual function where she goes out on her own."

Ernie (Maintenance Fitter and Deputy Covenor) (24).

If a wife's independent social activity can be seen as a possible cause of "unnecessary aggravation" for the husband, this effect may also result from her employment - even when this is essential and arranged so as to "fit in" with her domestic responsibilities. Soon after having her second child Ernie's wife took an evening job. They had just moved house and were experiencing financial difficulties. So she went out to the factory after a strenuous day with two small children. But he was immediately aware of his own loss of freedom.

"She went out to work... which was giving up her freedom. But as I saw it, it was also giving up some of my freedom, because I was spending evenings when I might possibly be out, even when I say out, I don't necessarily mean 'on my own' - out, just out - even with my wife, you know. She was at work, and I wasn't really having the choice, I'd got to stay in & look after the kids. Unless I got a baby sitter, but there again, the one counteracted the other, because if you get a baby sitter, you'd got to pay her like!"  
Ernie (Maintenance Fitter) (25)

Clearly, it was more than just the loss of free time which exercised Ernie here. More essentially he had suffered a restriction on his freedom to dispose - not only of his own "free time", but also his wife's time. Whatever the extent to which it might be circumscribed in practice, we would maintain that men's expectations generally, in this respect, stand in stark contrast to those of most married women who have little "free time" anyway, if only because it is disposed by others who expect to be able to do so.

#### Conclusions

Since most of the generalisations concerning the sexual division of labour in the household have already been argued elsewhere, our purpose has been to use the experiences and perspectives of the male workers interviewed illustratively, and as a means of drawing out some further propositions. Thus, what these few examples show about the different positions of men and women in domestic relationships, is nothing new. Men, to a greater extent than women, can concentrate their activities in the sphere of the social rather than the private world, and manage to retain a more direct relationship to property. As a result they clearly have, in comparison, greater access as a

whole to social power resources. Can we assume that the processes by which this inequality is maintained, whether within the family or outside it, are without further consequences? As we have attempted to show, they effect a differentiation of function and discrepancy of power which must give rise, subsequently, to distinctive interests and problems on the part of men and women at the workplace, and significantly pattern the relationship between them as well.

We have noted that men have greater freedom to dispose their own personal time and that this is to an important extent dependent upon their share of domestic work and personal caring being devolved onto women - from whom there is an expectation of personal (and sexual) service as well. This underlines the extent to which men also (expect to) maintain control over women's activities and use of their time, especially (but not necessarily exclusively) within the domestic relationship. This is seen further reflected in the marked differences between the two parties in terms of their independent social activity.

To the extent also that women's subordination is based upon their economic dependence we can expect to find this inequality expressed in their relationship both to family property - with ownership and control vested in the men - and the wage. The wages of men and women may not be equal in amount, but they are not conceptualised in similar terms or assigned equal significance either. Moreover the relationship of the wage earner to the wage appears to differ ("his money" and "our money"), with the degree of independent control exercised over its disposition, and the extent to which it is invested in tangible property (car, washing

machine) rather than the more intangible (groceries, petrol) yet necessary goods.

What broader implications flow from these aspects of the domestic relationship for men's relations with women at the workplace? What kind of view, for example, can male workers have of women workers, if they do not conceptualise their wages on similar or equal terms, if they understand domestic work as menial and boring - yet perfectly fit for women; and if they seek to exert control over women's independent activities, in short to manage them?

Taken together, it is clear that while these have been highlighted as aspects of on-going inter-personal relationships in the domestic sphere, they have implications which extend beyond this. Indeed each one indicates the existence of strong and widely operative perspectives underlying men's relationships with women, which are continuously being put into effect in the course of their daily lives. What is the nature of these "widely operative perspectives?" And why are they significant?



#### SEXISM

Sexism, as an ideology of inequality, refers to any conscious or unconscious practice - attitudes, language, behaviour - which asserts male domination and/or superiority, and women's subordination and/or inferiority. Thus we can point to the presumption that men expect to wield authority and control over women generally. And the expectation of personal service in the home is a particular manifestation of this, as is the restriction of women's independent activity outside of it. Both can be seen as material aspects of a society-wide male domination, which has in fact to be continuously re-established in every sphere.

If one consequence of this social process, constantly reproduced through pervasive sexist practices, is an active denial of female equality accompanied by a negative view of women (i.e. the assessment of women by male criteria, in terms of what they are not) it is important to examine the other side too, which is much less explicit. For a perspective is also being expressed through sexism, as to what (men see) women are: essentially, not only subordinate but, by male criteria, sub-human. And when this is examined it becomes clear that sexism is, essentially, an ideology of degradation; and this, as a widely operative practice, must certainly have significant implications for men's view of and response to women's problems and experience-in the workplace, or anywhere else for that matter.

The social and especially the domestic contexts are, therefore, important if we are considering the differences between men and women workers outlook and 'life' experiences. And also, of course, their approach to relationships with each other. We are concentrating

here on aspects of men's experience which might be expected to give them a particular view of the position of women in employment. And we would argue that what makes these views distinctive is the fact that they incorporate a special range of underlying assumptions which do not operate in the same way when men look at male workers or generalise about themselves.

A number of crucial implications can be seen to arise from this. On the one hand, male workers may fail to generalise from their own experience, as a means of understanding the position of women workers, or by operating a "double standard" fail to utilise the same criteria for assessment. The "gap" is filled with stereotypical and "unrealistic" views instead, which serve to block out or actively close down alternative means of evaluation. On the other hand, male workers may proceed to make generalisations and assessments which are, in fact, more valid for the men than the women. Their understanding is skewed through a failure to recognise or accord proper significance to the most crucial differences in their situations.

In the third part of this chapter we can see that these processes had a number of consequences in terms of the male workers' perception of and relationship to the women workers at BSR. But before turning to discuss the relationships prevailing between men and women on the shop floor, it is first necessary to indicate further (and prior) bases of differentiation, deriving from the labour market.

PART 2: MEN AND WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

"Women are more suited to the type of job they're doing here aren't they? (Are they?) "I think so. I mean because ... women do the tedious jobs don't they?" Gordon (Storeman) (26)

The labour market is the sphere wherein all wage workers are initially related to each other, and yet also differentiated. Linking family/household and employment relations, these market structures and processes are complex in their mediation. They ultimately find expression however in the characteristic and quite distinctive job histories of male and female workers. We are particularly interested to explore the way such differences are reflected in the nature of men and women's employment experience. And in the context of BSR, using the individual job histories of those interviewed, to examine more closely the implications which follow for male workers' relationships and responses to the position of women in the workplace.

Such prominent industrial and occupational segregation of the sexes as exists in the labour market and employment generally, may be seen to constitute at least three important dimensions differentiating male and female workers' experience with significant effects. First, in terms of job choice, where patterns of demand for labour allied to opportunities training and the acquisition (and use) of skills and experience differ markedly between the sexes. Being far more restricted for women than men, the latter's strong position is reflected in their greater security and confidence in the workplace and corresponding lack of appreciation of the women workers' position.

The second aspect we look at, job socialisation, draws out further the implications for male workers of their distinctive relationships with women in employment. We identify two features in particular which might tend to shape their perspectives: the extent of segregation and separation characteristic of male dominated work areas, occupations and industries, and the sexual divisions along lines of authority and control which prevail where men and women are employed together. A further distinctive aspect of men and women's job socialisation is their differential experience of trade union organisation. This was quite marked among the men and women interviewed, and although it probably varies regionally it is clearly linked also to the structure of the labour market.

In the final section we explore some aspects of the way male workers relate to "women's work", before going on in Part III of this chapter to examine in more detail their perceptions of the women's needs and interests in the labour process at BSR.

### Job Choice

Job choice for women in general is far smaller than that for men; and even this narrow range is considerably reduced when there is a need to find employment under terms and conditions which fit in with domestic responsibilities and women's relative physical immobility. These restrictions are clearly reflected in overall statistics, and unsurprisingly they were replicated in the individual job histories of the men and women interviewed.

We have already noted some major implications of this confinement to the poorer sector of employment from the women's point of view; one concerned the increased dependence on particular employers which may tend to inhibit confidence and freedom of action in the workplace. It is clear that the question of employment security cannot be restricted to the job which is currently held. It also extends to include the possibility of replacing it with another which is as good or better. Hence the direct relevance of the labour market; and the importance of historical and regional variations and trends within it, which structure the job choice of different groups of workers, and underpin their scope for organisation in any one industry or workplace.

Male workers' understanding of this in relation to their own situation is clear. Terry, for example, was a skilled maintenance fitter. He and his like have been generally considered more secure than most manual workers in their ability to hold their position in the labour market. Yet even in relation to his own "cohort" there were differences. And Terry was aware of how his wider experience benefitted him. He had been able to utilise and build upon his employment opportunities, in order to broaden

the basis of his skills, thus strengthening his position in the labour market relative to others - even in this relatively privileged group.

"I know lads now, who I served my apprenticeship with. They're still there, they've never moved. They couldn't work anywhere else I don't think - to be quite honest. They probably wouldn't have the confidence to work anywhere else. They know that job and they know everything that goes on there, but if it came to going somewhere else - say you've got 10 weeks to suit another job. I don't think some of them could do this."  
Terry (Maintenance Chargehand) (27)

Bob was employed as an unskilled labourer, and therefore somewhat closer to the position of the women workers. But once he had worked in the electrical trade, and again his position in the labour market can be seen reflected explicitly in terms of confidence at the workplace.

"I'm in a luxury position here, alright. I'm a shop steward, and I speak my mind just because I am a shop steward; but over and above that, I can speak my mind if I like - I've got two trades (And) If I want to, I can say sod it ..."  
Bob (Serviceman, Moulding Shop) (28)

The question of skills and employer dependency is therefore a further point of differentiation, reflecting the (varying) extent to which male, as compared to female workers, may generally be better placed to avoid the inherent tendency for employers to render their skills both easily replicated and company or job specific - since this reduces their market strength and "transferability". Allied to this is the fact that the specific skills women workers do possess, such as sewing or typing, tend to be widely generalised within this group which is, at the same time, strongly "ghettoised" in the labour market and thus subject to strong competitive pressures.

### Job socialisation

It is clear that the highly distinctive patterns of employers' demand for (and use of) female labour mean that most male workers neither share their experience in the labour market nor their experience in employment. Placing two BSR workers' job histories side by side, that of a woman or a man could never be mistaken the one for the other. This suggests that "job-socialisation" is likely to be of a very different order for male and female workers - particularly when they are employed in sex-segregated occupations. Are there any distinctive features of male workers' job socialisation which might shape their perceptions of, and relationship to, women workers?

### JOB SEGREGATION AND SEPARATION

In the first place, men are far more likely to be found in an exclusively single sex labour force than women. Since women's work is invariably controlled by men employed alongside them in a technical and/or managerial capacity it is men who work in entirely sex segregated industries and workforces. We look first at some of the consequences of this "functional" separation.

Given that we are interested in the men's perception of the women workers' problems, what are the implications of a sex-segregated employment experience?

Jim, for example, had worked as a labourer in a number of (unhealthy) metal treatment plants typical of the Black Country. Galvanising or stripping and plating are "dirty" trades employing few women.

(When you first came to BSR what was the hardest thing you found to get used to?)

"The hardest thing I found to do was to walk into the shop. Because you see, where I was working, it was away from the main department. I was in the stripping shop, and at that time I'd never worked with women and I used to get very ... I must have been very shy or something, I wouldn't go in. It gradually came about (and) I didn't trouble after."

(How long did it take you to get used to it?)

"About six months, I'll bet. It did, yes. It was just when I came. And if I'd got to walk through the shop, oh my God! I could have sunk through the floor! I could yes. Because I'd never worked with women before, you see, they'd always been men. And then you walk through a shop with about 2 or 300 women there, all looking at you - especially when you was fresh, you know, fresh face, and they all look at you. I could feel the colour coming up, all over, I could! So I'd always used to go all the way round the outside. I had - around by the gates - I had! (laughs). But the one woman worked up there ...

Well, I knew her dad you see on account of - I used to keep pigeons and race, you know, I was a pigeon fancier - and her dad was one, and we were in the same club. And if he came and asked me, or I came and asked him, we used to go down there. And of course, gradually she'd come to me, and I'd have to go and tell her something, and gradually I got used to it you see." Jim (Serviceman, Moulding Shop). (29)

Jim eventually became a shop steward in the Moulding Shop where he worked as a serviceman. His constituents were all women, with whom, he now considered, he got on very well.

"I'm not really the shy type now, as I used to be. I talk to 'em, well - they swear at me and I swear at 'em back ... In the same way as they speak to me, I speak to them back". Jim (Serviceman, Moulding Shop) (30).

Yet, it seems, the two worlds still remained somewhat separated by a "communications" gap.



(Are there any ways a woman shop steward can be better than a man or vice versa?)

"Yes. I think that a woman is better than a man here".

(Why ?)

"Because one woman can talk to another can't her?  
But a man can't really argue with a woman, can he?  
Not really. He can't really express himself, to her"  
Jim (Serviceman, Moulding Shop) (31)

Simply looking at the question of job segregation and socialisation from the point of view of the physical separation of the sexes, we can see how this has implications for the way women's position at work may be experienced and/or perceived by men whose contact with them may be minimal.

But there is a further dimension of this sex-segregated work experience to be considered. And we look now at the implications of the separation along authority lines. Jim's history can be taken as a case in point. An "untrained", "unskilled" worker with nevertheless a working knowledge of his trade, he was originally made a chargehand responsible for running BSR's metal treatment plant and put in authority over male and female workers. And it is surely very commonly the case, that where men do work alongside women, they are either in positions of authority over them, or in positions allowing them greater control over the women's work than the women can exert over theirs. Or it may be that both of these positions apply at the same time.

Where, for example, skilled craftsmen supervise unskilled women workers, the combination of technical and managerial control is unmistakeable.

Michael was a fully trained carpenter whose first experience of working with women was in a factory where he was made a chargehand. It was also his first taste of factory work which he experienced as a problem in relation to both his previous experience and also his sense of himself as a craftworker.

".... teaching girls to use wood tools - we made schools articles - chalk boxes, blackboard rubbers, T-squares".

(This was the first time you'd ever worked with women?)

"Yes, I got on very well indeed with them. But what I didn't like, I was forced by the management and circumstances to tighten up on the time the women spent at the toilets, the time they powder-puffed themselves, and that I resented. But that was part of my job ... It was ... the system, at the time".

(That was more of a factory job - did you find that difficult to get used to?)

"Yes I did really. It was sort of military to what I was used to - up at the bell, break down at the bell, break-whereas on a building site you don't even clock in, but you have to be more or less there at eight - but you're not tied to seconds, you know. Vast difference that was".

Michael (Carpenter) (32)

Nowhere in his discussion of his time at this factory did Michael consider that those things he found irksome might also have been a problem for the women. The women did not have problems, they constituted, more significantly, his problem.

(At Helix - in your opinion, what was the main problem that the women working there had?)

"The main problem was trying to get the young ladies interested in the job. They came to pick a packet up and go home. We had to make things that were on display, in schools, that was the hardest thing I found: 'Oh, never mind that, we've only got so much time to make this - we've got to make it - it's up to you to make our jobs easier, so that we can earn that money'".

Michael (Carpenter) (33).

Michael returned to the building trade and did not join a "mixed" labour force again until employed at BSR, and here he worked in the carpenters' shop which was separated from where the women worked.

We return to his views on their position in this labour process in a later section.

There is a third dimension to job socialisation which also to some extent derives from differences in labour market position between men and women - to be considered - and this concerns their uneven experience of trade union organisation. This has particular relevance for our study, and again the individual job histories can be used to illustrate some general points.

#### TRADE UNION EXPERIENCE

Of the fourteen women stewards interviewed who had been employed before coming to BSR, ten had worked in places where no trade union had any known presence. Their first contact with a trade union, and experience of working with unionised workers therefore, began when they joined the company. And it came when they reached the age - on average - of 40.

None of the men interviewed had been in this position. Only one had not been a member before and he had been employed in more managerial positions. Even though most of the men had not maintained a consistent or active membership themselves, nor had they always worked in unionised workplaces, it is clear that in contrast to the women a trade union and trade unionists constituted a presence in their work experience rather than absence. And this, of course, is to illustrate a general point: that the structure of employment bears a significant relationship to union organisation; and sexual divisions in the labour market see, in effect, the better unionised sectors skewed away from the women. (34)

#### CONCLUSIONS

In this section we have looked at individual job histories as a way of exploring several aspects differentiating men and women at the workplace which spring from and relate back to their positions in the labour market. While these are individual examples, there are important features of Jim's and Michael's job histories springing from sex structured differentiations in the labour market which can be considered quite widely applicable if we are, for instance, considering the nature of sex differences in "job socialisation". Because a generalised situation whereby male workers are either

employed more or less separately from women or, if not, in situations where they are in a position to exercise control over women and/or the women's work, must be significant when we come to consider the kind of appreciation male workers may have of women workers' problems, whether these are of a different, or even a quite similar nature to their own. And certainly a stronger labour market position in general, combined with their different traditions of working with trade unionists or in unionised workplaces, is also likely to have an impact on the kinds of problems the men themselves might face, and also the kinds of responses they might consider appropriate and open to them. Both of these again are likely to inform their perspectives on the women workers' position.

#### Men's work and women's work

Before leaving this section on labour market relations, there is another important aspect which our approach in terms of differential job socialisation and experience has missed. But any discussion of the male workers' position in relation to that of women workers and their problems must also consider the men's position in relation to "women's work".

Of all the characteristics identified and itemised as peculiar to "women's jobs" perhaps the most obvious (and often the least mentioned) is the fact that men are frequently highly resistant to doing them. While stressful, subservient, monotonous drudgery is disliked by people generally, in an unequal society men are better able to refuse or avoid it - and when they can they do. This fact and the reasons behind it are more rarely examined than, say, barriers to women taking up "men's" work.

But scattered references to male "cross employment" exist, which point to a more stubborn basis for job segregation than straightforward employer discrimination or "wages and poor conditions" arguments altogether sustain. Thus, an experiment in Sweden to "cross-employ" men and women in telecommunications, by external recruitment and internal transfer, could find only 25 male participants to do the work normally performed by women and a mere 3 of these were applications from within the employing organisation itself. 81 women took part. Over the first two years, only 4 of the 81 women had dropped out of the programme and the majority were reported as enthusiastic about their new jobs. But only 8 of the hard-won men said they enjoyed their work. The rest - criticising the monotony, limited scope for advancement, lack of responsibility and low pay - stated they would only stay on for as long as it took them to find another job. (35) Closer to home, when a mixed intake of school leavers learnt wiring on a job experience scheme sponsored by Coventry Corporation, the boys apparently learnt more quickly than the girls (despite the latter's much-famed nimble fingers). But the boys, in the end, went off and found other jobs and the girls, for whom there was little alternative, were the only ones left trying to find work with their major employer - GEC. (36)

Perhaps it may be difficult to disentangle how far such examples reflect the technical characteristics of the work and their subservience, and how far their specific identification as "women's work" (with the typically associated pay levels, status, promotion opportunities, etc). Nevertheless, we would argue that the nature of job content and work relations (in the light of possible alternatives), are certainly significant in respect of men and women's occupational "choices".

This includes, of course, their "refusals" - which they are not equally placed to do. This aspect of resistance can be further highlighted by the reported experience of male workers in a biscuit factory. A number of the foremen and also male Pakistanis sweeping up (the only other men there) had tried, at one time or another, doing the "women's" job - which was packing different shaped biscuits into different shaped boxes as they came past on a conveyor belt. Apparently, none of the men found themselves able to do this work. As they told their startled interviewer, this was because after twenty minutes they all got dizzy and fell over. (37)

These examples of the way men avoid "women's work," and indeed are able to do so, reflect the view they have of it. How then do men see those workers who are less well placed to refuse or resist?

In our examination of the women's problems in employment at BSR, it was found that these were not simply related to the general issues of poor pay and conditions, but crucially to the nature of the task - its repetition and monotony - and work relationships - the domination and driving - within which their jobs were situated. Their struggle was one against "dehumanisation and stress". How did the men perceive this? This was Gordon's view:

(What do you think of management's attitude to women and girls?)

"They have certain jobs to do and they have to achieve it. I couldn't see there'd be any basic difference. Women are more suited to the type of job they're doing here aren't they?" (Are they?) "I think so, I mean because women do the tedious jobs don't they? I couldn't go and sit there on the line and do the same job hour after hour, day after day, week after week like that. I mean the job is tedious isn't it, but those types of jobs ... They're more suited to women, surely, aren't they?"

(Do you think women like doing those sort of jobs?)

"No I don't think they like doing them. No-one really - there aren't many people that you could really say, enjoy their work. The largest percentage of people down at the bottom - that's why they fill in the pools coupon every week - they hope to ruddy well retire ... I mean they'd sooner be doing something else. I think over the years and more so in the production of the factory - you're not likely to enjoy your job so much. Because you see, you can't see the end product ...

"But surely women are used to those types of jobs, aren't they, on the line more so than men ?

Well I think they are, yes - It's their make-up isn't it really. I mean you can sit and knit quite steadily but a man couldn't could he? ... I mean, the more manual jobs - whereas I wouldn't admit it, being a male, women have got more patience on the whole - I must admit, you know, they've got more patience on the job - on that job anyway."

Gordon (Storeman) (38).

Gordon's comments are particularly relevant here. In the first place we have identified a number of "undesirable" features characteristically found in "women's jobs" which workers in general might wish to avoid (although men are better placed in the labour market than women to actually do so). It might still be expected, however, that these job features would retain their status as being problematic. But in Gordon's account, when women are the job-holders, it is quite apparent that they do not. What lies behind this significant shift? And what are the implications of this reversal? The second question is easier to answer, for it is clear we are seeing a complete denial of the problems of the women workers which derive from the nature of the job at BSR.

As to the nature of the "conceptual break" which we have noted, perhaps two points can be made. In the first place, there recurs a similar theme and pattern in Gordon's perception of the women workers'



position, to that which we have already identified in relation to Ernie and his views about degrading household drudgery. (39) Namely, that it is no longer degrading drudgery when this work is performed by a woman - a perspective which stems, ultimately, from a "degraded" view of women in toto. And one which moreover switches easily into the proposition that woman (instead) is problematic - which we have also come across with Michael. (40)

Following from this we would suggest, therefore, that alongside all the other material differences distinguishing the position of male workers which we might identify as giving rise to their distinctive views, the impact of sexism - the pervasive ideology of female degradation - is an absolutely crucial aspect of male workers perspective of women workers position. Expressing what is, after all, a problematic relationship between the sexes - named plainly by early feminists "the sex war" - sexism apparently conjures into operation a double standard which seriously distorts awareness of the facts and features of capitalist exploitation.

PART 3: MEN AND WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

" "Oh we've got some women spare, they're coming down from the press shop' he says, 'find them a job'. The chargehand said, 'I don't know what to put them on'. 'Course, big mouth, I interrupted because I knew ... 'you can give me as many women as you want - I will find them a job'." Bob (Serviceman, Moulding Shop) (41)

We are now going on to look at some of the implications of the sexual division of labour in the workplace for the male workers at BSR. We are again looking for distinctive aspects of the men's position in the labour process and we are particularly concerned to examine the nature of their relationships with the women workers. Throughout we are identifying the bases for, and aspects of interest differentiation which can be seen to arise as a consequence of the sexual division of labour <sup>both</sup> within the workplace and as we have seen outside it.

In the first section, we identify several features of the male workers' situation which contrasted with that of the women. Finding that the men did not necessarily experience the same kind of problems, in the same kind of way, we see that in a number of respects they were better placed to deal with those that did arise.

What are the implications of the various aspects of interest differentiation we have identified so far in this chapter? In the second section we look at male workers' views on two problems which we have already identified as having crucial significance for the position of the women workers: movement of labour and (the disciplinary control of) attendance. We find first that there are, again, some common themes shaping the men's perspectives and informing the individual views expressed. And secondly, that

these do not necessarily or wholly derive from male workers' separate experience of the labour process. We therefore return to a consideration of the way that men and women relate to each other in the work place.

These relationships are patterned along a number of different lines, and we look at the impact of three: domestic relations, authority/control relations in production and general social relations. Not surprisingly, we find that the overall inequality between the sexes is sustained in the way these sets of relations are mediated through the relationship of employment, which they, in turn, help to shape. And we go on to explore further some of the implications of this.

#### Male workers in the labour process at BSR

We have already noted that men and women occupied different positions in BSR's labour process and they were separated along a variety of lines. Few men were engaged in production jobs, and those who were tended to operate within boundaried locations or separate buildings (e.g. machine shop and EPS plants). At the Stourbridge factory, practically the only males who worked with women and who were also of equivalent (semi-skilled) status were the labourers who serviced the female production workers. Thus two immediate consequences of the sexual division of labour in terms of job segregation and differentiation of interests between men and women on the shop floor) can be identified: first, the men who had little contact with the women production workers had little direct knowledge of their situation or problems either; and secondly, even though some men (such as servicemen) did have contact with the

women they did not share the same problems as the female production workers in any immediate respect. They were not on piecework or "measured" work, but paid standard time-rates graded by "skill" differentials; neither were they under the same authority structure, answering to the nearest male chargehand, foreman or departmental manager. As a result of such physical and structural separations there was, as one might expect, both ignorance and lack of appreciation of the problems experienced by the women production workers on the part of the men at BSR who did not share them.

The intention here is to identify some of the general features of the men's work situation which appear to stand in direct contrast to that of the women. (42) In particular, we want to look at those aspects characterising the position of male workers in the labour process which, while especially valid for the skilled groups, were also in varying degrees applicable to non-craft males as well. Such aspects can be seen to comprise: first, the men's relatively greater physical mobility; second, their job "ownership" or entitlement, and their relative freedom from disciplinary-based driving, plus their greater scope for discretion in work performance; and third, features of their work environment which facilitated association on some basis other than one which was purely task-related. Such aspects are not coincidental. Taken together, these are key aspects of job control and collective organisation. Furthermore, they are not simply reduceable to a question of male workers' "attitudes" or "orientations", which is the usual basis of comparison and explanation when women's "shopfloor power" is contrasted unfavourably with that of men.

One of the first things which strike an observer on the shop floor is the difference in physical mobility between the men and women. Men circulate around the shop floor in their capacity as labourers, manager/supervisors, inspectors, work study or maintenance engineers. The women workers sit or stand at their work stations unless specifically released to go to the toilet or sent to fetch something. While the general accuracy of this situation is easily observable, not all the men enjoyed the full run of the plant or as much freedom from supervision and control as, say, the maintenance engineers. This category, in particular, also comprised the most strongly organised group of workers, so a more sustained look at their position is instructive.

Although the number of fitters and electricians had increased rapidly in the early 1970's, the amount of plant they maintained had grown faster so they had been subject to work intensification to some extent, and, more noticeably, to an increasing amount of overtime. After the union was recognised, a more orderly system of ensuring maintenance cover was introduced with the two shift system, but the men still put in long hours with regular overtime and systematic week-end work (both Saturday and Sunday mornings). Also, some "mobility and flexibility" in the deployment of these workers was practised, although this was nothing like the mobility arrangements affecting the women production workers. The skilled men employed had been trained in specific areas such as woodwork or pipe-fitting but tended to continuously broaden their areas of work (and competence) under the pressure of keeping up general plant maintenance with an insufficient number of "specialists". Even so, no male workers in contrast to the women were explicitly employed without any specific job entitlement. And the men,

whatever their level of skill, had some kind of job designation. And we have already suggested that the presence of this kind of boundary within the employment contract is an important aspect of workers' ability to control the amount of effort extracted from them, i.e. the extent of their labour power's utilisation. Hence the issue of job demarcation is surely as immediately relevant to the question of job control, as the related and more widely recognised aim to preserve overall employment opportunities.

"In our department, we have to do a whole variety of work. Sometimes it means metal work ... With modern unions today, woodworkers only touch wood, metalworkers only metal, and paintworkers only paint. With our job we have to do the lot. And we're constantly being politely reminded 'that is not your job'. We've got a problem now of a painter in another factory being asked to do something which isn't within his trade and he has refused to do it. ... but if there's no alternative way out, then he will have to do it". Michael (Carpenter) (43).

Job demarcation specifies and limits within boundaries the kind of work demands which can be made by employers. It also ensures that these demands are kept within the range of job practices already subject to the workers' effort controls. These controls have, of course, been incorporated into established job practices already, and acquired by the worker in conjunction with his technical competence. Otherwise (and in any case), they are developed by workers as part of their job knowledge and experience. Since the employer continuously attempts to demolish such inhibitions on his utilisation of labour, the maintenance of job demarcation is not unproblematic. The point being made here however is that, in contrast to the women, these workers had jobs they could demarcate.

And their "job control" problems, in relation to the women's, were therefore of a different order entirely. No male worker, skilled or otherwise, was subject to movement of labour as it was practised on the women production operatives.

Again on the theme of job control, the maintenance workers were relatively remarkably free of managerial supervision, driving or discipline. Although required to apply themselves to breakdowns and emergencies they could exercise a great deal of discretion over the jobs they did and the way they did them, and over the use of their time.

"You see I'm a maintenance fitter and maintenance fitters can walk about and 'skive' a bit, I mean, when the pressure's on and there's a lot of breakdowns you're all brought together and do them, but you know - it's the same everywhere I've worked, you can 'skive' to a certain degree like".

Ernie (Maintenance Fitter - Deputy Convenor) (44)

"The fitters had been used to taking their own decisions. They went from job to job as people asked them to look at things. Then when they got a chargehand he could never find the fitters because they rarely went into the shop to be given new jobs".

Terry (Maintenance Chargehand) (45)

"You complete a job, wash up and smoke. Have times with nothing to do. You may walk round and spot something. Every so often you walk down to the shop and if you're wanted you're sent off to repair something, but if no-one says anything to you, you just wander round and find little jobs to do. You keep going to the shop occasionally - you soon hear about it if there's a major breakdown and then you all get going on it".

Ernie (Maintenance Fitter - Deputy Conveyor) (46).

This contrast with the work situation of the women was so marked that it had once been the cause of some trouble. One of the maintenance men habitually took himself off to the upstairs assembly section, well away from the main shop, and passed his

days chatting-up the women and making comments about their work. While the women were being driven - "It is sweated labour, you haven't started to work until you feel it trickling down your back" - he was being paid twice as much as they were for apparently doing nothing at all. Following a wage settlement which saw the men better rewarded "for their skill", the women's agitation became plain, whereupon he was moved away from the area and told off for "stirring them up".

As it happens this story also serves to illustrate a further point of difference, since it was originally offered as an example of disciplinary action being taken against a male worker and came after the following observation on this particular subject:

"When we go in for warnings it's a bit of a formality. I don't really have to put up any fight. The superintendents don't like everybody in shop - it depends on who it is, but I don't have to get involved or argue and fight for them as such .... because when it comes to the stage of a warning, they don't usually get one unless they deserve it so they accept it anyway."  
Ernie (Maintenance - Deputy Convenor) (47).

It was clear from their responses to the same questions as the women that the male stewards were rarely called in on disciplinary matters, even in respect of the non-craft male workers. Was this because the men perpetrated fewer "offences"? On a question such as absenteeism, this might have been expected to be the case; the wife of one of Ernie's mates had gone in to hospital for a hysterectomy. He found no problem getting the days off he needed:

"She only came out on Saturday. He's got a small daughter 10 years old - they've both been married before-and have a grown-up daughter in her 20's, who's come over to stay with him to look after the kid and fetch her from school and things like that, you know. Since his wife has come out, he has lost no time, so either his wife is managing or his daughter is still staying".  
Ernie (Maintenance Deputy- Convenor) (48).



But in addition to the men's more fortunate position, it is also quite clear that management instituted disciplinary action far less readily where the men were concerned. There is no evidence of a disciplining offensive such as that we have identified in relation to the women, which had such debilitating consequences for their employment security and job controls.

(Bad timekeeping?)

"Yes, we've got one or two of those! Well there are about four culprits in the shop. There are some people that just can't get up. It's just a fact of life - you know, you could put a bomb under them.

There's one guy in there, they've suffered him for about 7 or 8 years now. He's an electrician's mate and if I told you, you just wouldn't believe it. And I've been in with him - warnings and keep sticking up for him and that, you know - but I'm getting to ... He's a mate as well like, you know, I have a drink with him and that - it's getting to the embarrassing stage now, because he just ... if he can have 2 days a week off without a warning, he'll have 2 days off every week. And if he can be late 2 days a week without a warning, he'll be late the other 2 days. And even with a warning, right up until the last stage when he's going to be suspended or summat - he'll just keep on, and then he'll just about scrape in for a week, till his period's over like ... well he's a single chap, he can probably manage on 3 days money a week, you know what I mean, and that's what he does.

This particular guy - I think they're pretty lenient with him, you know. Although he's me mate, I think they're pretty lenient with him, 'cos he is an embarrassment to the rest of the shop. Our gaffer, being a decent sort of bloke, if it comes to the crunch, like, where he might get sacked or anything - he might sit on a warning like and have a quiet word with me and say 'look Alan's going to drop us all in the shit! And I'll have a quiet word with Alan and he'll be a good boy for about a week, you know. But they've suffered him that long now, I can't imagine them doing anything about it".

Ernie (Maintenance - Deputy Convenor) (49).

The final point of contrast which might be made concerning the position of male and female workers in the labour process is that in relation to the social organisation of the work groups, the men's

working environment itself, outside the direct line of management discipline and driving for low cost, high volume production, was markedly less stressful.

(In what ways does your job affect your life outside work?)

"It benefits it. This job benefits my life outside work ... I leave here at night with a relaxed mind".  
Michael (Carpenter) (50).

(Have you had a member in trouble because of difficulties doing the job?)

"No. Not really. If anyone's stuck they all muck in and help".  
Ernie (Maintenance - Deputy Convenor) (51)

Also, in comparison with the women, the men's working groups were small (52) and apart from the peripatetic servicemen, they were compact; being located in specific, bounded areas of the factory or in workshops, within which these workers enjoyed a freedom of movement and association denied to women tied to machines or hemmed in at specific work stations in full view of all on the open factory floor. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the men were in a much better position to hold meetings amongst themselves or indeed that they did so:

"Whenever I come back from any negotiations or I've got anything relevant to tell them concerning pay, or action being taken or anything at all, I go and ask Brian ... the only time I can get them all together is 2 o'clock, the one shift finishes at 2 and the other one comes on at 2 and you've already got the day workers there, you see."  
Ernie (Maintenance, Deputy Convenor) (53).

And management were able (and prepared) to turn a blind eye.

"Really, he's doing that off his own bat, you know. If we went and asked John, John'd probably say no and then we'd have to force him by going and clocking out and standing on the car park - but he gives me quarter of an hour ..."  
Ernie (Maintenance, Deputy Convenor) (54).

In this section we have noted a number of features characterising the position of male workers in the labour process at BSR, which although not shared by them all to the same degree, presented, nevertheless, a significant contrast to the women. What implications can be drawn from these differences as they were patterned by the sexual division of labour?

First, we have suggested the male workers' appreciation of many major problems experienced by the women production workers would be coloured by the fact that they did not themselves share them. Secondly, since we have shown that the main points of contrast between the men and the women's position comprised also key elements of job control, we may conclude that the male workers were better placed to deal with problems arising from managerial strategies to undermine their employment security and to increase their effort and productivity. At the same time they would be less likely also to be posed with the same kinds of problems as the women in this respect - or not to the same degree. As indirect workers they were less subject to the production drive, and as men they were less subject to the disciplinary offensive (assisted by having women in the home).

#### Male workers' perspectives on the women workers' problems

In this section we look at the men's views of the women workers position and their problems. Again, these discussions are an expression of individual opinions and no claim is being made here that "all the men held the same viewpoint". Our interest in what are, at one level, idiosyncratic considerations, lies in the fact that they also incorporate some general perspectives worth noting, and it is the nature of these that we wish to explore.

We have already suggested how structural separations might give rise to significant differentiation of interests between male and female workers, and lead to a "lack of appreciation" of the women's problems on the part of the men. But it would appear rather more than a "lack" of knowledge is involved. Questioned about the women's problems, the male workers interviewed clearly had views of a particular kind.

In this section, we look at two particular problems the women faced - movement of labour and attendance - through the eyes of the men. We find that there are major themes marking the men's perspective (some of which we have already identified in our analysis of domestic and labour market relations) and these were: the utilisation of "double standards"; a view of women workers as the problem and a concentration on how they could be controlled; and biological explanations for their problems.

#### MOVEMENT OF LABOUR

This was one of the biggest problems the women workers faced.

And this was Terry's comment.

(Movement of labour at the factory only affects the women - what do you think about that?)

"Let them try it on the skilled men, that's all I've got to say about that"

(Do you think the women should do something about it?)

"No. Because in a factory of this type you've got to have movement of labour. You've got to be able to have the labour where its needed, whether they like it or not - whether they like the agreement or not. You see the trouble is - well as far as I know, the firm's s'posed to tell them of this movement of labour agreement, and when we put you on a job you're not on that job - that isn't your particular job. They should just have them all classed as semi skilled operators and that's it".

Terry (Maintenance carpenter) (55)

What was the nature of the criteria being used here which resulted in this "double standard"? And where had Gordon been all these years when the women had been saying "it doesn't work like that" ?

"I believe the movement of labour can be a safeguard. THEIR first reaction is, you know, that it is detrimental, but ..."

(You don't get moved around like the women do?)

"No. There isn't this element in stores and goods inwards. Obviously where you've got thousands of people on lines, it's got to ... logically come into it - more then, or whole departments where a job ceases to exist. It's wiser to accept a movement of labour situation than have them made redundant ...

Movement of labour can also - where the first thought would creep into their mind that - this is going to penalise us - it can also work in their favour can't it? It can safeguard them. And probably I would say, the movement of labour here has safeguarded more people than it has penalised". His emphasis upper case underlined. My emphasis lower case underlined.  
Gordon (Storeman) (56).

It is rather easier to suggest the implications of such perspectives than their sources; if issues crucial to women workers are denied any status or existence as problems by men, they are unlikely to engage much support. Take, for example, the wide issue of management's control and production policy, which incorporated a particular kind of disciplinary offensive maintained in three main areas - factory conduct, job performance and attendance. It was in relation to the last of these that the women's struggle was perhaps posed in its most acute form, if only because it was the basis on which they were most commonly disciplined (and also disciplined "in common").

#### DISCIPLINING ABSENTEEISM

Gordon, who was a representative for some thirty male labourers and servicemen, expressed this view:

"I don't see that it's really so great an issue because there are not many of them get penalised on the final count anyway. It's may be a little spell they're having - if it came that I'd got a lot getting penalised such as suspensions and that, then probably you'd fight a little harder for it, but it hasn't got to that stage".  
Gordon (Storeman) (57).

But Jim, a serviceman himself, was also shop steward for 150-200 women in the moulding department. He shows clearly how his views informed the kind of action he might take on their behalf.

(Do you have to go in for warnings?)

"Yes. Just after the holidays I had about eight in. Some had been on their holidays. One woman made the excuse, that her husband was on the staff and he was entitled to a week's holiday, so she thought she was entitled to one as well. But she'd already had her week. She didn't think she'd ought to have had a warning because she had a week off with her husband. But she'd brought no notes, nothing so she'd got to have a warning.

"But the others, they were all the same, they'd had it - their husbands had had their holidays at a different time and they had theirs with them. I believe you couldn't blame them for that".

(So do you think they should get warnings for that?)

"I think in a way, unless they advise the management before"

(But they get one even if they tell the management?)

"Yes, but it's only a verbal warning then you see. It doesn't really count as a serious warning, it's only what they call a verbal warning. If they just take it, well they get a written warning".

(You can refuse to accept a warning can't you?)

"Oh yes. If there's a reason for it. I mean if I thought one of the women was in the right, I'd refuse to let him give her a warning".

(Have you ever done that?)

"Only once. There was - well, I will admit that the woman should have had a warning, but the chargehand what did it went the wrong way about it, you see. He just walks up the shop with a form in his hand and he says, 'sign this'. She called me and I went up - she says, 'He's given me a warning', and I say, 'What for'. He says 'absence'. I says, 'Well you're quite out of order. I says, 'You get back into that office' I says, 'and next time you have me in that office and you have her as well'... 'Oh' he says, 'well come on then'. And I said, 'Oh no, you're too late, you've by-passed that now, you went the wrong way about it', I says, 'You should have done that in the first place'. And it all died off".

(What is the main reason the women give when they go in the office?)

"Well, they try to make excuses, you know- the child was bad - or nobody to mind it - her husband was going to a darts match or something. You know that it's not the truth but .. they still get the warning. They still get the time off anyway".

(Have you had to do warnings for bad timekeeping?)

"They go into the office and I'll be fair, he does ask them the reason - what was the reason - have you got a reason? And they give all kinds of reasons you see. But you can't believe them - but you can't argue with them because they're not ... it's just this opinion. You can't get and say "you're telling bloody lies, you wasn't .. (laughs)".

(What reasons do they give?)

"Well, they're either - they've had to take the child to the hospital or down to the doctors, you know, or they've had to 'phone the doctor to their child - the bus breaks down things like that".

(Do you think they are always untrue?)

"None of them are hardly true" (None of them?)

"No, I don't think so". (Why don't you think so?)

"You can tell by their faces, can't you?"

Jim (Serviceman, Moulding Shop) (58)

These examples have not necessarily shown that the men have entirely failed to perceive that the women workers had problems. But there is a certain consistency in the way the matter appears to resolve itself each time into an appreciation of the women workers as the problem. There appear to be at least two identifiable components to this perspective. First, the view that the women need to be controlled, with the men adopting a profoundly managerial approach to what needs to be done. Secondly, there is an interesting reduction of the definition of woman-as-problem to the biological and sexual; with menstruation being posed as both an explanation for the problems the women faced as well as an explanation of why the women themselves constituted a problem (in the first place).

Ernie's discussion illustrates the first aspect. He actually takes the women's problems as a starting point, but then shifts sharply into an exposition of managerial control, problems and strategies - as soon as the question is raised as to how the women's problems might be resolved.

(Now that you've got more contact with the problems that the women have, what do you think is the main difference between the problems of the men and the problems of the women?) (59).

"The women - the management say there's a problem with absenteeism you see. And the women don't like having



warnings - and have a lot of warnings. And I think a problem I find with the girls - in some areas they find difficulty in getting pass-outs.... Now speaking from my own shop, which is all I can speak for, we don't have any problems like that and yet the girls do.

There is a bit of absenteeism, but there again, a woman like, you know, there's lots of reasons why a woman can be absent aren't there? Especially if she's married and got a home to run and kids as well, and she hasn't got to be ill - it just can't be avoided can it, that she's got to be away.

This firm lately don't seem to recognise that, you know, they're just treating them as workers and you know, if you're absent - bonk, you have your warnings etc. Well - they're trying to like. Lately they seem to have tightened up more, seem to be having a bit of a purge on the absentee thing and the pass-out thing. I may not have been aware of it otherwise-it's just as a shop steward I know".

(Should the women be allowed more than 2 days off in 3 weeks?)

"It's a difficult one to answer because I can understand the management have got to maintain - like we work very hard to mouth here, that's probably one of our strengths, you know, why we're so profitable - we don't keep large stores of things. So they have got a problem trying to maintain a flow of work from upstairs - downstairs - down to here for the lines etc. So what do they do? Do they put on more labour to cover it or what? I think they're ought to be a personnel officer just for this sort of problem, more involved like - who can sort the wheat from the chaff.

Because obviously, you've got some who are just ... I mean, you've got people who'll just keep on and on because they want to get the sack, you know, and they'll just .. and there's others they don't want to get the sack, but they're 'skivers' like, you know, and then you get the genuine ones who've got the kid in hospital, or the mother's ill at home, or the husband, or they're separated, and they've got genuine problems. But they are, you know, abusing the system. So when you say do you think they ought to have - I think we should adhere to the system we've got".  
Ernie (Maintenance & Deputy Convenor) (60).

This view of the women themselves as basically constituting the problem crops up again and again. What are the implications of this perspective? Ernie's response was typical of the male workers. When faced with the issue of how the women's problems

might be resolved, there was a tendency to slide readily into strategies to control the women instead. But another important aspect was the tendency to divorce knowledge of the fact that the women did experience problems, from an appreciation of the sources of the problems in the policy of the firm. Thus the causes were seen to lie, not within the employment relationship at all, but within the women themselves.

If there is nothing problematic about the way (men and) women are employed, i.e. if there is nothing significantly to blame in the women's work situation, then the "difference" in terms of the problems they face must lie with the women workers. In which case it can only be due to one thing, because one thing especially distinguishes them as "not-men": the menstrual cycle. Thus we have Michael's view of the driving of the women. He had observed the dolorous consequences of this ("I've seen many women in tears here"), but these were solely seen to derive from the women's own "weakness". The nature and experience of their employment relationships had no independent reality or meaning for him at all. The cause of the women's problems was the "women's problem", and this was also the cause of them being a problem as well.

(What would you say about the manner of management towards the women and girls?)

"Personally I think it's quite good. I think it's quite good. The management is looking to the women for their bread and butter, so they've got to drive the women to such an extent - so that they can get their bread and butter. It's as simple as that"

(Do you think they drive them too hard?)

"I don't think so. I don't honestly think so. Work that we had to do years ago - it's a piece of cake today. It is, it's a piece of cake".

(If they were all men, do you think management could treat them in the same way as the women?)

"Definitely no. Oh, some women - little things ... I've seen many women in tears here. I'm talking personally now. The regular ladies' monthly, some of the men - that's of no concern - 'you should be doing that job'. She might be suffering agony. They don't know, she knows. Her performance is affected, so she's victimised ... you know. This is why it's difficult - ladies have more problems than men in many ways, but the men don't see this at all. And it leads to quite nasty problems, I've seen many women in tears here".

(You think the management should be more sympathetic?)

"Oh I think so. But everything's geared to piecework and production output, so ... it's very difficult to - you know, you're dealing with lots and lots of women. If they all decide to be poorly one day then obviously the production's going to go down. It's inevitable. But I'm certain the management make allowances for these things in the timing of the jobs. .... the humanitarian approach. Oh gosh, yes".

Michael (Carpenter) (61)

What we are finding is that the men's appreciation of the women workers' position does not simply reflect the structural separations of the sexually divided labour process; nor the differentiation of interests which this might engender. The men's perspectives are marked by major themes, which have their sources elsewhere; but which certainly have implications for the way they approach and relate to the problems of the women workers on the shop floor.

What were the consequences of those kinds of views? Before taking up this discussion, we need to examine one other important aspect of the sexual division of labour. What was the nature of the relationship between the men and women workers in the labour process?

Workplace relationships

It would seem that men's perception of the position of women in employment may be strongly coloured in such a way as to bar useful generalisation from their own experience as workers within capitalist employment relations. One aspect of this - their close alignment with the managerial policy regarding women's jobs (and women's problems in them), may arise from the fact that married men in particular are already strongly instrumental themselves in the disposition of their wives' (and daughters') labour and labour power. This is already viewed as conditional upon their own and the family's needs. In the workplace, utilisation of the female becomes conditional upon the (male) employer's needs. Thus may perception of women's employment relations and conditions in general be mediated by other relationships in such a way as to establish quite particular modes of understanding of these on the part of male workers.

In this section, therefore, we attempt to locate some of these modes of understanding of the women workers problems, and their mode of expression in terms of themes (some of which we have already identified), within the major sets of relationships patterning the mixed labour force at BSR. We look at three in particular: the domestic relationship; relations of production; and generalised male/female relationships. They are in no sense discrete. All express different aspects of male control over women, mediated by and also mediating the labour process and the position of women workers within it.

First, we look at Michael's discussion of the women workers' position in employment, which is especially interesting for its rather remarkable "double standards". But the main point is the way his perspective on the women workers' position at BSR is so strongly mediated by his own position as husband, father and head of the household. While objectively he is solely associated with BSR women by the one relationship which alone they hold in common - all being workers selling their labour power to the same employer - this is so overlaid by his own sense and practice of relating to women outside the employment relationships that their common situation within it sinks out of sight. What remains is a strong sense of difference, pervaded by inequality, which results in a "double vision" of unusual clarity.

(Have you had members in trouble for absenteeism?) (62)

"Absenteeism in this factory is colossal - but it's very, very negligible amongst my members"

(What is the main reason for it?)

"Extremely urgent business, bereavements, dental appointments ...."

(What would be the main reason for the women?)

"Well they face severe problems don't they - with children ill, during the school holidays for instance, who looks after them? It's a very tricky problem, actually. Quite honestly, it wouldn't have happened in my house, it just wouldn't happen. My wife stays at home and looks after the children and I earn the wages."

(The firm here allows the women 2 days off in 3 weeks before they get a warning. Do you think they should allow them more than that?)

"Oh gosh no! That's quite adequate in my opinion quite adequate"

(Have any of your members been in trouble for bad timekeeping?)

"I have a deplorable timekeeping record myself ... Why am I late? I am not a military person. I am not

woken up by false means in the morning, i.e. alarm clocks, I wake naturally, so when they change the clocks - how the blazes can I wake up today the same time as I did yesterday? Oh honestly! You've got me on a point now, timekeeping"

(Do they have you up about it often?)

"Fortunately, not now. Things seem to have settled down. But I am not a machine. I am not woken up by false means every day - it's not something that ... I'll be quite honest, I'm not proud of it. What on earth I can do about it I don't know. Half the people on the ground are bad timekeepers, and I know for a fact that people in top jobs have got worse timekeeping records than I've got"

(What do you think is the main reason for women's bad timekeeping?)

"Generally speaking, the old problem of working women with children - that is quite simply the right answer".

(Do you think management have the right attitude towards that?)

"Certainly. The management have to meet a production level. If Mrs so & so's little boy is poorly and she's got to stay behind to get him off to school, how the blazes can the management reach their target for the month?"

(How do you think these women can cope then?)

"I quite honestly do not know how they cope. My wife would be totally incapable of doing a full time job and bringing 2 children up and looking after hubby".

(Do you think the management should be more sympathetic?)

"No. Oh no, I think they're quite sympathetic with what they're allowing now, quite honestly."

(Have any of your members had problems at work due to injury or illness affecting a member of their family?)

"My wife has been to the doctor and in bed for a day or two". (Did you have time off?) "Oh gosh yes! Then up come the old time study (sic) people - lateness! And pounce on me like a ton of bricks. 'I'll come at 8 o'clock - you come and look after my children and get them off to school!' That's my answer to them! It does create problems of course it does - it's got to, when you get illnesses... I've attended funerals which I've no need to, but I feel it's my duty, to pay my last respects. That goes down with a black mark with management too".  
Michael (Carpenter) (63).

A second crucial dimension structuring sexual divisions in the labour force at BSR concerns the distinctive pattern of power and authority relationships within the labour process itself which also forms a significant basis for interest differentiation. Indeed, it is true to say that the majority of male workers who were in contact with women had authority over them in some respect. They controlled women directly in a supervisory capacity or they were in a position of direct control over the women's work performance; for example as tool makers, setters, plant operators, quality control/inspectors or maintenance workers. Again, it is to the latter, a particularly important group at BSR, that we pay special attention here.

What features distinguish the respective positions of maintenance and production workers in general within the labour process? What difference does a sexual differentiation make in terms of these relationships?

With regard to the first question, two points might be made, one at a general and one at a more specific level. First of all we can look at the function of producing (surplus) value and the use of machinery at the point of production. The only new value added to the product comes from the labour which is, apparently, "set to work by" the machinery. (64) In fact, the machine operator both produces new and reproduces "old" value at the same time. Values incorporated in the machinery can only be realised when it is put into motion. This machinery, like other forms of capital, is useless to the capitalist, unless put to work by labour which both produces a surplus and unlocks values already in existence in the form of "dead labour". Just as it seems as if it is the machinery

which puts the operator to work, so also does it often appear that it is the maintenance engineer who provides work or employment for the operator. There is, therefore, a tension within these sets of social relationships.

It is the function of the maintenance engineer to maintain "dead labour" in a form in which it can be consumed - that is, in its "original" state. The cost of the engineer is thus, more properly incorporated into the cost of the machine itself, these values being released into the product once the latter is set to work. In contrast to the operator, therefore, he is not in the business of transforming value as such, nor of directly adding to it. And he, along with the machinery, is useless to the capitalist unless the latter is put to work by value-producing labour. In a similar sense, objectively, the maintenance engineer is also dependent upon the production workers performing their proper function for his own existence, and he may be conscious of this "alignment" with the employer's interest.

This was how Michael, a carpenter (in building maintenance), saw his position in relation to production workers.

(Do you have any dealings with work study at all?)

"We work very closely with work study. Work study people, their job is to make a woman or a man turn out more products per minute and if it can make a jig that can help do that job, we make it".  
Michael (Carpenter) (65).

If the position (and interests) of direct and indirect workers in relation to capital and the production process can be differentiated at this general level, so can they also be in a more concrete sense. The job of the maintenance workers was to maintain production and keep the women working and effectively they were in a position of



control over the machinery. It was in a real sense that they set the women to work, and could exercise some control over when, where and how they performed. In the following example it can be seen how the lines of sexual division running parallel with this separation overlay and apparently shifted those tensions we have seen as arising within the production relationship onto different ground entirely. Because the production workers were women, the assumption of a managerial relationship appears "natural" and is quite explicit. The somewhat apocryphal character of this story (related by a male maintenance fitter) serves, if anything, to highlight the main points:

The experiment

"As an experiment - we used to have an electrician here - ever such a good chap. I've never had such a laugh in my life as when I worked with him... And he was really up on moulding machines, and he reckoned he could double the factory's production and half the workforce - he was an electrician but he'd done his training on moulding machines and that, and he knew his job. He proved to me, he said 'watch this' - and so for a fortnight he kept turning the speed up on one machine. They kept saying they couldn't turn out proper motor spindles on this certain machine above a certain speed. He said 'That tool, Terry,' he says, 'I can speed it up regularly for you'. You know, the women kept complaining for a fortnight, but in the end they were turning out double the amount of spindles, and the women were working to that figure without realising that we'd turned up... well a setter discovered it in the finish and turned it back. But the women they complained amongst themselves but they didn't complain to anybody else.

(What would have happened if they had?) "I don't know ... it was just an experiment, he was showing me that it could happen, it could be done. And since then the firms caught on to the fact. Over the last 3 years, they've more than trebled, in my estimation, the speed of those machines, and the quota they want out of them". Terry (Maintenance Chargehand) (66). My emphasis.

But the pattern of power and authority relationships structuring the sexual division of labour and interests at the workplace cannot be viewed simply in terms of the labour process alone. In this society men seek to exercise control over women in general and in particular contexts such as marriage and the household this takes distinctive, institutionalised forms. These social relationships structured by sexual inequality are hardly cast off at the factory gate. As Bob's story shows, the boundaries wherein men "manage"/or control women in the workplace have a potential so elastic as to include, at times, even himself - an unskilled labourer. If such boundaries can cut across employment hierarchy and relationships like this it is because they are, in fact, male-society wide. Bob was a servicemen and also a union representative for 150-200 women in the moulding shop. Critical of management, he was keen to show how he could do better. However over-drawn his example might be, his expectations and assumptions are perfectly clear.

"I was in office and there was a chargehand from the opposite shift there. R--- (Superintendent) turned round and said, 'Oh - we've got some women spare, they're coming down from the press shop,' he says, 'find them a job'. The chargehand said, 'I don't know what to put them on'. 'Course big mouth, I interrupted because I knew you can give me as many women as you want - I will find them a job'. He says, 'What do you mean?'. I says, 'well this shop's been a bloody disgrace for long enough - and I've told you about it before. Now you give them to me, I'll find them work, I'll get this place cleaned up tonight'. So eventually - I only got 2, but they gave it a damn good clean up. Now, I didn't just put those women on cleaning up, I gave them other work to do as well - I let those women - I told them what I wanted done, I helped them along a bit, I knocked 'em off, I brought them a cup of coffee, I treated them - alright. But I got the job done as I wanted it, see you see what I mean" Bob (Serviceman, Moulding Shop) (67).

Conclusions: Class relations

A particular outcome of the job ~~segregation~~ which we noted was that many male workers were likely to remain ignorant of the women workers' problems, or else carry an awareness which was tempered by the fact that they were not, themselves, subjected to the same conditions. On the other hand, no male worker expressed ignorance as such. Indeed they had views which contained a number of common strands - despite the fact that the men speaking stood in a different relation to each other in production and to the women workers also. We are forced, therefore, to look more closely at the matter of relationships as well as the lines of spatial and "functional" separation in the labour process.

Hence it can be seen that, on a number of different levels, inequalities in power and authority plus access to control resources ran in favour of the male workers, and away from the women. To the extent that the men exercised direct controls over the women or the women's work, the presence of a differentiation of interest structured into the power hierarchy is clear. But we have also noted the impact of control relationships and interests which do not either directly or solely derive from the authority structure of the workplace; while the way these mediate and are mediated by the employment relationship is complex, we have been especially concerned to draw out some of the consequences. And here we find further reinforcement for the overall effect of sexual inequality and sexist ideology which is: fundamentally to deny the basis of the women workers' problems in the relations of production and exploitation.

We end this chapter by noting that this process is further reinforced by another very important feature of the male and female workers' relationship in employment at BSR: that of "co-exploitation".

As we shall see, the male workers in general and specific groups of them in particular, were consistently able to gain the larger share of the rewards accruing to labour from the company's (growing) profitability-in large part dependent upon the increasing productivity of the women workers. In the "craftsman's" dispute, for example, the struggle of the maintenance workers was publicly aired, with this group displaying an increased ability and willingness to exercise bargaining power derived from their stronger position in the labour market and labour process in order to gain the largest share of the annual wage award. But this open conflict was, in many respects, an explicit expression of a long prevailing circumstance whereby their greater ability to retain control over the labour process compared with the women production workers had helped gain them, as it had for all of the male workers, a relatively greater share of the product.

The male workers certainly perceived that their employment prospects depended upon the firm's continued viability and that this, in turn, was founded upon the cheapness of the product. To the extent that this was seen to be based on the low wage and high work-rate of the mass - the women production workers - they had little interest in seeing the women's conditions altered - if anything, their interests ran in the opposite direction.

It is probably true to say that such relationships of co-exploitation are to be found in every labour process and thus structured into every labour force (also between them) and so reproduced within the working class as a whole. But what is the significance of these relations for working class organisation when they run systematically along sex-divided lines? We suggested earlier that it is important

to identify distinctive sets of interests which arise within the labour-process and prevail among different groups of workers whatever their sex. But we are also proposing that the shape of any resolution of these in class terms is patterned, in practice, by relationships prevailing beyond the factory gates.

Looking at the household/family and the labour market, we have attempted to show that socio-political and economic relationships and divisions of interest between the sexes are an exceedingly crucial dimension; so that lines of "co-exploitation" in employment which parallel sexual divisions in the class take on a peculiar significance. One reason is because male workers' vested interests in the economic sphere meet, and tend to be supported by, their vested interests in the social and particularly the domestic spheres. (68). The limitations derived from the latter which are placed on women who seek employment ensure their systematic recruitment in the super-exploitative sectors. This circle can only effectively be broken by the women themselves pushing forward their particular interests - which is why their's is often seen as the most significant area of the general class struggle.

But still it might be argued that interest differentiation along the lines we have explored, such as separation and hierarchy in the labour process for example, is totally characteristic of almost any labour force; are all workers, then, irrevocably divided or fragmented as a result? And in relation to the household and family structure, depending on whether they are younger or older, married or single, workers clearly stand in positions significantly differentiated from each other. Are we proposing that there is no possibility of them finding common ground?

While it is true that we have been especially concerned to point out the basis of division between groups of workers both within production and outside of it, it is not suggested that these differences cannot be resolved at any other level. Perhaps it is important to say in the first place, though, that they exist to be resolved. And our particular focus has been on the division between men and women because there does seem to be a number of very important problems associated with the resolution of differences here.

Throughout this chapter, wherever we have identified objective differences in the position of men and women which might give rise to sets of interests peculiar to either sex in specific marriage/domestic and production/labour process relations for example, we have also had to note an accompanying and quite distinctive aspect of the males' perspective. We have suggested that this is derived from power inequality which structures male/female relationships in every sphere. It finds expression in a number of common themes which shape the male workers' perceptions, such as: the double standard or use of de-graded criteria in relation to women; the determination of women as problematic (and requiring male control); and the reduction of women's humanity to biology i.e. the de-humanisation of the female.

What are the effects of this distinctive slant in the male perspective? We have suggested that this can be seen rather in the same way as a geological "rift" or "fault" by which there is a structured break in underlying objective continuity - in this case, in male workers' perception of the common basis of their position, with women, in capitalist employment relationships. The consequences

can be assessed at two levels. In the first place, a generalised understanding for men of their mutual situation as wage workers with women is blocked through the operation of differential criteria. In the second place, the general tilt of this understanding is reversed through a displacement of subject in the problematic (here, the relations of capitalist exploitation being displaced by the women workers). The effect of both of these is to render significant features of capitalist exploitation "invisible" when they are viewed in relation to women.

This tendency has to be seen in conjunction with the differential structure of interests which pushes male workers, as co-beneficiaries, controllers and utilisers of female labour, to adopt perspectives closer to management and the employer himself. (69)

Thus wherever these perspectives and differential interests in relation to women shape the understanding of male workers, we would propose that their responses, at both an individual and collective level, to the position and problems of the female workforce will be problematic. (70).

MEN AND WOMEN

Footnotes

- (1) The nature of the links between them - for clearly, the distribution of functions will reflect the nature of power relations between the sexes - is not examined here as it lies beyond the scope of this study. It remains, moreover, an area where much work needs still to be done.
- (2) Ref GH 21/S3: 748-810
- (3) Ref BM 11/S2: 240
- (4) See Hunt (1980) for a useful discussion on this issue
- (5) See, for example, Cavendish (1982), Pollert (1981), Perkins (1983), and Beale (1982)
- (6) Ref TM 1/S1: 28
- (7) Ref GH 15/S3: 46-50
- (8) Ref GH 25/s@: 180-206
- (9) Ref MC 31/S4: 88-105
- (10) Ref MC 29/S3: 780-790
- (11) Ref TM 25/S3: 720
- (12) Ref BM 38/S4: 654-660
- (13) Ref EC 50/S6: 239-250
- (14) Ernie, for example, found that his relationship to his wife was quite different at work compared with when they were both at home, but he could not understand her or her depression, even by a simple projection of his own feelings about domestic drudgery! In the following account, his assumptions, expectations and assessments, both implicit and explicit, come over quite clearly:

(Does she like doing housework?)

"No she detests it. She would prefer to work full-time and pay someone to ... she has said this often, she wouldn't mind working full-time and paying someone to do the ... well I s'pose they're menial tasks aren't they? The Hoovering and washing and ironing and things like that.

(What do you do?)

"Drying up. You know, the ordinary day to day things I probably wouldn't get involved. I mean if I've been doing some decorating or something or other I will Hoover up and things like that. But I mean, I wouldn't, possibly, Hoover up as a job like, unless I'd made the mess. If she's ill or anything - obviously I do things then, but ... possibly help her to cook a meal occasionally or actually do the washing up and drying up like, you know. But as



regards making the beds, hoovering washing the clothes, cleaning the brass or anything - I don't get really involved, you know".

(Are there any jobs that you refuse to do?)

"I refuse to take stuff down to the washateria (that probably doesn't follow now because we've got an automatic washing machine) but I just don't. It is a thing against my ego to see a guy in a washateria. It's just, you know, a personal thing with me. And yet, I do remember when we had a lot of rain once, I took some stuff down to dry like ... Probably we'd had a row or summat and I was trying to get in her good books I don't know. But I really don't agree with blokes going down washaterias, it's just ... I don't agree with it, I just ... don't like it at all".

(Do your children help in the house at all?)

"Not really they would like to ... I think my wife should give them more opportunity. If they do, they're going to make mistakes - but I think she should give them ... Occasionally she'll give them some pastry and that to play with - they would love to help out - but I think Kitty wants her jobs out of the way. So rather than have the trouble ... although the kids have got to get, shall we say - trained and have got to learn how to do things to look after themselves or the house - she prefers to get the work done and get it out of the way, rather than spend time showing the children. So they can help her - I mean considering we've got two girls, they should help really, you know. But I think that's her own downfall that they don't."

(Do you help with looking after the children?)

"Yes - I do. I mean when she was working I had no qualms about changing nappies ... bathed them and put them to bed - when Kitty started working the hours she does now, you know - it stopped because she was there to do it like".

(Did you used to help your mother?)

"You'd be surprised. Yes I did, - polishing and everything when I ... I distinctly remember doing all the menial tasks when I was a young kid. (When did you stop - can you remember?) When I started fancying girls probably! Possibly right up till I was about 10 you know, and then I went to the secondary school and started getting involved with football and things like that you know. I hadn't got time for anything, only myself, probably".

(Do you ever get tired or depressed?)

"Yes - I do get depressed. I s'pose really its mainly about money. Especially before we had a rise like, you just wonder where it all goes to, and how you're going to cope. And, you know, I've got a nice young attractive wife, I want to take her out and I want her to enjoy herself or show her off or whatever you like. I want us to have fun together - I don't see why we should be restricted from enjoying ourselves because I can't afford it -"

(Does your wife ever get tired or depressed?)

"She amazes me, she works here and everyone passes comment how well and nice ... I mean she's attractive like, but apart from that she'll always smile and speak to someone and be friendly and that you know. And the same with me like - I go up and talk, you wouldn't think we were married. I mean I spend a lot of time up there talking to her like. People think its my girlfriend they don't think its my wife. And yet I go home and she'll be completely different, you know what I mean - she'll be in a depressed ... I think possibly when the kids get home - the younger one is very taxing and runs her down a little bit - she does get depressed - you know, not really bad, but she does get depressed a little bit. But I get a little bit depressed as well".  
Ref EC 45 - 47/S5: 771-918

- (15) Ref TM 8/S2: 246-250
- (16) Ref JG 7/S1: 369-380
- (17) Ref TM 24/S3: 677-691
- (18) Ref BM 39/S4: 770-800
- (19) Ref MC 31/S4: 77-88
- (20) Ref BB 32/S3: 50-114
- (21) Ref GH 26/S4: 140-150 x 26/S4: 338
- (22) Ref MC 33/S4: 301 -
- (23) In fact a whole gamut of social and personal controls exist by which women's movements are directed and constrained by men. One of the strongest is of course, the fear of rape and humiliation in general. Most male control mechanisms relate to their attempts to retain power over women's sexuality. Note, in this respect, Ernie's "I trust her".
- (24) Ref EC 49-50/S6: 165-220
- (25) Ref EC 48/S6: 109 x 49/S6: 122-130
- (26) Ref GH 6/S1: 855-885
- (27) Ref TM 5/S1: 890-949
- (28) Ref BM 18/S2: 840-856
- (29) Ref JM 16/S2: 68-88
- (30) Ref JM 28/S2: 866-887
- (31) Ref JM 28/S2: 866-872
- (32) Ref MC 4/S1 241-270
- (33) Ref MC 5/S1: 337-346

- (34) It is, certainly, not particularly useful to suggest that a difference of this kind 'explains' 'less militancy' on the part of 'unschooled' women workers. Since it is just as likely to be related to the opposite. See for instance Drake (1920) Part III Ch. II.

Thus no specific or general conclusions can be drawn about men and women's experience in employment simply from looking at their position in the labour market. It is necessary to examine this experience in practice, and to draw out the implications empirically.

- (35) See TUC (1980) - Equal opportunities: Positive Action Discussion Document.
- (36) See Chesterman (1978) p.151
- (37) See Mitchell (1971) p. 128
- (38) Ref GH 6-7/S1: 855-945
- (39) See above p. 312
- (40) See above p. 323
- (41) Ref BM 10/S2: 150
- (42) Perhaps it should be said at the outset, that while the men did enjoy many advantages denied to the women workers, this should not be taken to suggest they had no problems of their own!
- (43) Ref MC 17/S2: 520-547
- (44) Ref EC 14/S3: 75-84
- (45) Ref TM 7/S2: 91-101
- (46) Ref EC 14/S3:
- (47) Ref EC 25/S4: 140-150
- (48) Ref EC 22/S3: 687-707
- (49) Ref EC 21-2/S3:
- (50) Ref MC 9/S1: 661-670
- (51) Ref EC 24/S4: 80
- (52) Carpenters, toolroom and maintenance fitters were each around 30 strong.
- (53) Ref EC 20/S3: 427-440
- (54) Ref EC 20/S3: 440-480.

(55) Ref TM 27/S3: 925-950

(56) Ref GH 17/S3: 235-256

(57) Ref GH 16/S3: 170-199

(58) Ref JM 22-23/S2: 440-534

(59) He had only recently been made deputy convenor.

(60) Ref EC 28-29/S4: 350-457.

(61) Ref MC 8/81: 608-660

(What is the main reason for people leaving?)

"Better money elsewhere.

(How often do people leave?) "Very few in my department - they've been there for years. Quite content. But they come and go in the factory like wildfire.

(Why do you think that is?)

"General desire to earn as much money as quickly as possible (Even for the women?). Yes, and the men. (But do you think the women can get better paid jobs elsewhere?) Quite honestly, I wouldn't have thought so. (Do you think it is the main reason women leave here?). It isn't the main reason, its one reason. The other reason would be, I think, discipline. There's quite a lot of discipline here - which there has to be if you're on a piecework fast - production line, which has to meet an output at the end of the week. It's inevitable that is.

(In what ways might you see a woman leaving because of the discipline?)

Well like I said earlier to you - the monthly problem that ladies have. That woman can be 50% below physical and mental capabilities for that time, so her production will be down. She is then jeopardising the pool in her group - which are paid out a monthly bonus, so obviously she's being victimised. To such an extent that tears and almost fighting matches - these fortunately, are isolated incidents but they do take place." Ref MC 13/S2: 152-198.

(62) Michael was shop steward for thirty three members, most of whom were carpenters and all male, in the building maintenance section.

(63) Ref MC 14-15/S2: 198-297

(64) See Marx (1976)

(65) Ref MC 17/S2: 475-485

(66) Ref TM 29/S4: 35-60

(67) Ref BM 10/S2: 150-174.

- (68) These links are certainly not unproblematic or without contradiction - for example, where men/families are dependent on women's wages.
- (69) This is not the same thing as saying that the male workers were in the same position as capitalist exploiters of female labour power - quite clearly they were not. What is being identified here, are some of the generally prevailing pressures which seem to underlie an apparent common tendency or distinctive slant in male workers' perspectives of women workers. A slant which persistently saw themselves as (needing to) exercise control over women as the source of the problem, rather than the conditions and features of their employment and exploitation.
- (70) A further note on sexism: "Assumptions of a particular kind"

This conclusion, which addresses some important implications of sexism for working class organisation and politics is stated at rather a broad level because more detailed work on the parameters and components of this ideology has yet to be done. As a brief contribution to this, we can examine two discussions by men on women's work and women workers which contain manifestations of several "assumptions of a particular kind".

We can see, in the first instance, that these 'assumptions' are in fact more than that - they are 'operational definitions'. That is to say, they are also a practice whereby men may seek to define and also to control the sphere of women. In this discussion of the sexual division of labour, the 'argument' is constituted by the assertion of male interest:

"Don't ask me what - but there are some jobs that women can't do you know. If you say what? then I'll say breaking coal up, and you'll say there's nothing to stop a woman doing that ... But there are just some jobs that a woman can't do and equally so, there are some jobs that blokes can't do aren't there? That's a fact of life, I should say.

(What sort of jobs do you think men can't do?)

"Well, I mean you've got men midwives now haven't you? Well, I mean I would have thought that was an area that a man couldn't have got into, but they have. Everything I say I'll probably be proved wrong, you know - working with handicapped children and things like that - a woman tends to do those type of things, and looking after - I s'pose you just naturally expect a woman to look after kids don't you like? You see. I think a woman is more suited to that type of work than a man obviously".  
Ernie (Maintenance - Deputy Convenor) Ref EC 38/S5: 136-161.

When we move in more closely we can find a few more 'definitions'. This time they are being martialled by a male serviceman with a bad back who feels his job threatened.

"Well there are some jobs that women can do a damn sight better than men."

(What sort of jobs?)

"Well intricate jobs, small, component parts etc. But I do not

agree with employing women on manual jobs or doing a man out of a job, which they're doing in the moulding shop at the moment. They've got service women, but these service women don't do the job. Let's put it this way, they don't do the job as good as I do it. They do it as good as some of the service men do it. (Because some of the service men, I wouldn't pay them in bloody washers, I tell you quite frankly)."

(How do they do it differently?)

"Well there's heavy stuff to lift, so therefore a man will go and lift it. Whereas a woman she'll take a few spindles out of a box and take them to her machine and then, alright, she's got to go back and get some more, and so forth. That's a waste of time. That is not production."

(And a man would take the whole box?)

"He'd take the whole bloody box!" (And do his back in?)

"... He'd do his back in - you crafty devil, you! No, but you see what I'm getting at? Now, forget whether they are doing a job as good as a man or not. Just forget all that. Do you believe that a four-hourly woman who maybe has a husband working, should do a man out of a job on an 8 hour shift?"

Bob (Serviceman Moulding Shop) Ref BM6-7/S1: 800-850.

In this discussion Bob makes various appeals - first to his own superior - and women's inferior job performance - and next, more strongly, their lesser entitlement to employment. We can see that, as one argument falls another can be called into service, but all are well rehearsed assertions of inferiority and therefore inequality as far as women are concerned. On another occasion, talking about the women workers' problems the discussion took off on another familiar route: women are a problem and they are also defined as inferior social beings as well.

"Well you cannot expect a woman - I wouldn't expect you to lift a towpan of spindles that can weigh anything up to 2 cwt. But you see, they've got women on these jobs ... Again you will find women (and if you're playing this back to women, they can cock their ears up again) you will find that women can be very bitchy to each other. Whereas a man, he'll have a downright ... he'll have a downer and most likely go up to the Barlow Mow and say - 'Oh, wasn't that a bloody row we had in there....'

But the women can be very bitchy to one another, and I have found that I've got 170 odd of them tonight to deal with and they do tell tales...." Bob (Serviceman Moulding Shop) Ref BM30-31/S4:1-77.

Putting these points together we have a view now which sees women defined: into certain social roles and out of others; as economically dependent appurtenances of a man; as inadequate people and as inferior workers. In truth they are allowed no independent existence, certainly not one which is independent of a man; 'operative definitions' - as this unfortunate woman found:

"I had a case where a girl had been on the same machine for blasted years and she ruined 2 tools in 2 nights and she got a

suspension for 2 days and I upheld it".

(Why did it happen?) "Because she was just damned careless, and her husband works upstairs, he's one of the bosses upstairs".

(Did she get a warning?)

"If its negligence - this woman was warned, and then the next night she turned round and did the same damn thing all over again. So I upheld the 2-day suspension".

Bob (Serviceman Moulding Shop) Ref BM24/S3: 309-327.

What has her husband got to do with it?

PREVIOUS CONTACT WITH UNIONS - MEN AND WOMEN SHOPSTEWARDS

Women: Total 17 (3 straight to BSR from school not counted, so only 14 used)

	<u>Contact with union in previous jobs</u>	<u>Previous union membership</u>	<u>Age first contact</u>
Barbara	No		42
Carol	No		26
Jenny	No		45
Jill	No		35
Janet	No		37
Lorna	No		47
Madge	Yes	AEUW Engineering Shop	17
Nora	No		48
Pip	No		41
Pearl	Yes	CPSA Civil Service	18
Pru	Yes		40
Sarah	Yes	GMWU Press shop	32
Sally	Yes	TGWU Buses	19
Tracy	No		37
	Average Age first contact		<u>40</u>

Men: Total 6

Bob	Yes	AUEW	25
Ernie	Yes	NUSMW, TGWU, GMWU	20
Gordon	(Yes)	(none, self-employed)	(43)
Jim	Yes	Bakers Union, wire-workers' union	35
Michael	Yes	ASW	21
Terry	Yes	BISTAKTA AUEW	23



CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS, PROBLEMS AND RESPONSES

In the first chapter of this Part, introducing the firm and its workforce, we noted that married women workers have long taken their place in the "active" labour force, and we asked what particular problems they might find within the employment relationship at workplace level. If they are recognisably engaged as "married women with domestic commitments", are the difficulties experienced in the labour market, which are associated with this special status, left behind at the factory gate - particularly one that is apparently especially designed to admit them?

We find that they are not. Moreover, distinctive needs and interests in employment, differing fundamentally from those of men, arise as a result of women's notable position as both waged and domestic workers. Their experience of this and the particular problems encountered, shape demands which challenge the nature of the employment relationship and the organisation of work itself. How might these demands be achieved, and what problems are associated with instigating the necessary changes?

Looking at the position of the female workforce within the employment relationship at workplace level, we see that this is also distinctive and peculiarly problematic as well. In the case of BSR, the women workers bore the main costs of management's production policy in practically every aspect of its requirements. We have noted how, especially in terms of "stability" and "flexibility", these requirements stood diametrically opposed to the workers' needs. Thus we have found that stability in the labour process was achieved by flexible utilisation of labour - at the cost, from the workers point of view, of extreme instability and insecurity in employment. On the other hand,

flexibility required by the workers met with severe rigidities on the part of the employer - to preserve stability in the labour process; and stability required by employees was similarly countered because of the way it translated into costs for the employer-this time in terms of inflexibilities where flexibility was required. Because of the particular position of the female workforce in the labour market and also in the workplace, the employer was better able to pass on the "costs of stability" to be borne by them; with, from the women workers' point of view, highly stressful consequences. (1)

We are interested in pursuing some of the further consequences of this process, whereby the female workforce bore the costs of market competition and instability. What impact did it have on the women workers' ability to take up their demands and to change their situation, not only in terms of the double burden, but also their position in the system of production itself?

Looking at the women workers' responses to their position in the labour process, we can identify a number of strategies at an individual and collective level, for coping with, resisting and regulating, the impact and application of management's production and control policies. Job control practices were a central concern of both managerial policies and the women workers' responses, since protection and advancement of these (from the workers' point of view) provided the basis, in terms of a stronger bargaining position, from which changes might be made at workplace level.

The main organisational focus of change for workers at this level is, of course, the trade union; under the auspices of which the workers engage in bargaining via representatives, with the employer. In order to examine the extent to which the women workers were able to defend

and advance their interests (both in terms of the labour process and outside it) by these institutional means, we need, of course, to look at their position within the trade union itself. The substance of this analysis lies in Part Three of this thesis. Here, however, we note that the question of job controls which is being raised in relation to the women workers' non-institutional responses on the shop floor, at both an individual and collective level, remains highly relevant. This is because, we would argue, that these comprise an essential bargaining resource for workers engaged in negotiating their interests inside (or outside) an institutional context, in relation to the employer, other groups of workers, and their own representatives.

We conclude this part of the thesis, therefore, turning first to look at the way the problems the women experienced in combining work at BSR with domestic responsibilities, shaped their demands regarding their employment. Lending urgency to the need for change, is a view of some of the personal costs involved for women - which cannot simply be seen as a consequence of the double-burden alone. Indeed, the latter's importance should not detract from those problems associated with each of the two spheres in which these workers are engaged, considered separately. The domestic role assigned to women, their isolation in the home, immuration in the family and social subordination in general, is a crucial source of stress, needs and demands. Likewise, employment, with its dehumanised and dehumanising work and power structures, is a source of oppression in its own right: a wellspring of resistance and focus of demands for change.

"It's a woman's factory isn't it?"

The women workers at BSR soon discovered that despite appearances, the labour process was not organised with a recognition of their needs. They could not alter the hours they worked or change shifts - job transfers were not allowed. They could not take time off without the risk of punishment through disciplining or loss of the job altogether. They could not even be certain of getting permission to leave the factory (a pass-out), without which the instant they left, they would be deemed to have 'sacked themselves'.

As we have seen, management's policies and activities were governed by the needs of production, or, more specifically, prioritized stability in the organisation of the labour process, and flexibility in the use of labour. This militated against the married women workers' needs for flexible terms of employment. And we again note that there was no tidy match between the 'supply-side' characteristics of the women workers and the 'demand-side' aspects of their utilisation by the employer. Rather, the opposite was the case - because the two forms of flexibility stood in contradiction to each other.

For instance, it was the generally rigid application of the 'no transfers' rule, that lent both force to, and underpinned the movement of labour principle. No-one could get out of, or refuse to do, the job they were put on - other than by leaving the company altogether. (2)

Application of the 'no job transfer' rule also extended to workers wishing to alter their hours, even if it was to do the same job.

"If they do leave it's because ... they started when their children were very young and father could look after them in the evenings. When the children get about 7 or 8 and at school, the mother wants to be with them in the evening, which is only natural, so therefore they want to change

their shift. And ... I fought it out with John Smith ... I told him straight, it stank - I said, 'you've had these women 7,8, & 9 bloody years, and you're treating them .....

(But) they can't change their shift."

Bob (Serviceman - Moulding Shop) (3)

Thus flexibility for the employer was predicated on inflexibility for the employee. The ability of the women to impose some kind of priority on the organisation of production in relation to their needs is a major subject of our enquiry. Their demands, with which we must begin, arose from their position as waged and domestic workers, and the problems they experienced. But these demands were given a sharper edge as a result of some of the consequences of their situation and those are outlined below. We then move on to look at the substance of the demands themselves.

Inflexibility on the question of time-off, was certainly one of the women workers' biggest problems. For the married women workers with domestic responsibilities, taking time-off was the crucial means of reconciling conflicting demands, even though it entailed temporarily foregoing their wage. But it was never permitted for other than medical reasons, although, of course, occasions for it could arise from myriad circumstances. Here, problems arising from this general prohibition are illustrated in relation to just one of the many possible instances - holidays with the husband.

"Talking about problems, right - women, working in industry, with a set date for holidays, such as the industrial fortnight. A lot of women, their husbands don't get that holiday. My husband doesn't he's a busman - so he gets his holidays when they say so, see? So the women have their holidays with their men - which is an obvious thing to do, isn't it? Unless you're lucky and you can get on your own! But...they have the ladies in to the office, and you know - ask them why they've had time off - why they've gone to Majorca for a fortnight, and...the girls tell 'em: holidays with their husbands.

Well, they've always accepted this, and I feel that they should accept it, because - its a woman's factory, isn't it? And, this year they've accepted it - but over the past few weeks, they've kind of ... started to crack the whip giving warnings and they've threatened that next year they will bring in suspension for women that take holidays out of their .... you know. Because it slows production up. So I said, 'Well, if this slows production up - and next year if ... the first one of my members that is suspended - production will stop!'" Sally (Sub-Assembly) (4)

"The women object to signing warnings if they've been on holiday with their husbands. They get a written warning, even if the women say beforehand ... One woman had a week off with her husband and she'd worked the BSR .... holiday week but she still had a warning!" Madge (Moulding Shop) (5)

The women were subjected to systematic disciplining for taking time off as if they were free as individuals to dispose of their labour power and in this disposition had total choice or control over their work attendance. The reality - that they had not - underpinned their 'stability' in terms of the type of work and meant, ultimately, that they were being penalised for not being male workers: for being women or rather, wives and mothers. This predicament, that so many had in common, made the issue a crucial one.

They did not take time off for themselves, but for others, nor had they control over the circumstances.

"I mean you don't order these things they just happen, and they all come for the money - the people that come here, they come for the money. The older ones come, even when they're ill. You'll get some people, they'll come even when they're on their last .. you know, they can hardly drag themselves here! and they'll moan about it all day, but they'll still come". Janet (Sub-Assembly) (6)

Punishment was inflicted on these women who took time off (and lost money) for the sake of others, just at those very times when demands upon them were heaviest.

"Another had her husband ill. She was had up in the office for absenteeism 3 times".  
(Eventually he went to hospital where he died).  
"She didn't have doctors notes but she did have proof that her husband was in hospital - which she had to attend to see him in any case. But she was reprimanded on several occasions".  
Pip (Sub-Assembly )(7).

The fact that the women were being recruited and penalised on the same basis - their family responsibilities - created a vicious circle which was a source of great stress:

"It's absenteeism which, of course, as I've said to you before, it's unavoidable in a woman's factory. I can't see in a factory like this, where you've got children who are sometimes taken ill, or school holidays ... And then you've got the various shifts - they've nearly all got children, that's why they work these odd shifts ... and I can't see how you can avoid the absenteeism really, with all the warnings under the sun. It will only frighten the person to a nervous disorder - more than stop her taking time off, because if she's got to take time off .... " Pearl (Convenor)(8)

The kind of pressure which is indicated here, was, of course, exacerbated by management's inflexibility regarding both transfers and pass-outs:

"Pass-outs - terrible! We 'ave a lot of pass-outs, because they're married women with children. And its either dentist, clinic, or school day, which ... A long time ago - I'm going back about 4 years - BSR used to understand those problems with married women ... Well, this week, they're on a kick. By all accounts, the superintendents, they were signing a terrible lot of pass-outs. So Mr Smith sent a memo round to 'is superintendents - 'You're signing far too many pass-outs - 'I want you now to double-check and triple-check, that they've got a card or a note to say where they're going to. In other words, they're callin' us liars ... well, the girls, I should say". Jill (Supervisor- Final Assembly)(9)

As the women frequently pointed out, it was not possible to produce a card to cover every circumstance - even from places that usually gave them. (10) The women were faced with the unpalatable choice of losing their jobs: instantly-in the case of pass-outs - if

they left without one; or eventually - if they incurred too many days absence (because they couldn't get pass-outs or for any other reason):

"He has refused several requests for pass-outs. And it makes it very difficult - the women are forced to take a day off. Well, when they've been in the office (for disciplining), I've said, 'Why on earth didn't you come in - when I told you to come in - and get a pass-out?'. They say, 'Pip, if we've got to have this trouble to get a pass-out, we'd rather take a day off'. So - where do you go from there? They're forced ... and I get it every week". Pip (Sub-Assembly) (11)

The only cause for absence acceptable to management was personal incapacitation of the worker herself, 'proved' by a doctor's note:

"This week its school holidays, so there's many away. They'll get warnings, unless management eases off. Some are getting wise to 'em now, they bring in doctors' notes.." Nora (Final Assembly) (12)

The effect of this was not only to deny legitimacy to any other reason, but actually to deny the existence of other reasons:

"You have to give a medical reason even when it's not. And a lot of people say, why should they have to tell a lie?". Janet (Sub-Assembly) (13). Moreover, the doctors took a dim view of this procedure. "They do, every person that goes to the doctors, they only mention BSR, and they go 'Oh, that bloody place again'". Nora (Final Assembly) (14)

"(And) doctors won't always give them - that's the problem - they won't. As a matter of fact the doctors turn round and say, 'we don't like giving our patients doctor's notes - costing 8Op. just to please BSR' - that's their answer.

Then some children have the usual infectious illnesses - and there again the doctors won't come in just to please BSR". Pip (Sub-Assembly) (15)

From the women's point of view, not only did they feel that the legitimacy of their responsibilities should stand by itself rather than be denied by having to be presented in false terms, but they felt the process itself was irresponsible. Even when it was a matter of



their own health, there was the question of anti-social behaviour:

"Some people, if they're ill - like say, diarrhea and sickness, or the 'flu - they don't feel like they should go to the doctors and worry the doctor. So they don't want a doctor's note. So they say, if they've got the 'flu and they can cure it themselves, which I know myself. I could cure the 'flu myself without going to the doctors, by staying in bed. But yet my work wants a doctor's note, to say I've been ill, but I haven't even informed the doctor. So how do you go from there." Edna (Final Assembly) (16).

The women workers' needs and demands

How could the vicious circle whereby the women were both recruited and penalised on the same basis - their family responsibilities - be broken? The women put forward a twofold demand: the punitive system had to be abolished, and production organised positively in such a way as to accommodate their requirements. Both of these aspects, the first to defend and the second to advance the women's position, are clear in Edna's account which springs, quite clearly from her personal appreciation of the circumstances.

"Well, to me I would abolish anything like that. There again, sitting on the working side - I'd abolish it. I can understand the management have got a big problem here, but - like I said, when they take on a lot of women, they've got to put themselves into a situation - when they do start us - that we're going to have the time off. So there shouldn't be any need for all this.

I know there is a few youngsters thinking, 'Oh, it's good money' - they haven't got much responsibility, and they have time off for nothing - but they're still going to have it off, whether they're taken in the office or not. But it's the people that have got a responsibility to the home, who need the money - that gets all the worry and the trouble over this absenteeism.

They think, 'well if I have time off - they might sack me, and I need my money, and I can't have this off - and it's a big thing, it's a big worry. I mean, you're afraid to have time off. That's how they make you, they're making you afraid. Not me personally, if I wanted time off, I'd have it off. But I know there's some not so strong minded as me, - they're very weak - and afraid! And I've known them come to work, and they've really been ill! And I say - 'you shouldn't be at work'. 'Oh, I can't have

this off, oh, I'll have to go in the office, oh .... I say, 'well send a doctor's note in'. 'Oh, I don't like ....'. You see, they're saying 'Oh I can't go to the doctors with the 'flu. It's too much trouble for my doctor, it's only the 'flu. Which I can understand, because they've got a big responsible job. There may be somebody's life in danger, while you're taking up the time with the 'flu. But - where do you go from there? The firm has you in the office and burns you up - and you'll be suspended or sent up the road, I mean, it's a big problem". Edna (Final Assembly) (17).

The women made demands which required a positive orientation of the work organisation towards their needs - in both a subjective and objective sense. In general, they needed to be able to make those responsible decisions which affected the family's income and/or welfare such as:

"Now if she's got to 'ave time off with 'er 'usband which doesn't 'ave the same 'oliday as BSR - that man's gonna lose more money than she is, so its best for the wife to 'ave the holiday with the man ... 6,000 women work here - and you can't tell me that all 'usbands are gonna 'ave the same 'oliday as BSR." Jill (Final Assembly - Supervisor) (18).

More than this - management had also to embody their appreciation of the women's position and responsibilities towards others, in a definite system which would enable them to fulfill these; for instance:

"A woman was fetched off the line because her daughter had been taken ill at school, and it was 15 minutes before she could get a pass-out, to go out. This problem's come up several times at the shop steward's meeting. Management say, if it falls in a break, then the women have to wait till work starts again. But we feel there should be a system - being as this is a woman's factory here, there should be a system here - that in an emergency, like that, the woman should be able to go out". Nora (Final Assembly) (19).

Not only this - the women had material requirements as well.

"Because the women have often said that to me, 'why don't they have some room where the women can bring the children?'. I mean when you look at it, there's a lot of women as have to have time off now for children, sort of - got nowhere to leave them. If they had got a place, the women could bring them, and then they could come to work and then collect them

after ... And it would cut the absenteeism wouldn't it, in a woman's factory?" Nora (Final Assembly) (20).

Predictably too, the women wanted greater choice and flexibility over the hours that they worked. And their preferences showed clearly how these could be related in a variety of ways - and also change - according to domestic and personal circumstances. Of the 16 women interviewed, for example, 12 were full-time workers, and seven of these wanted to work different hours. (21) 4 of 16 women were working part-time shifts and 2 of these now wanted to alter their hours. The other two were happy to remain on their shorter hours "I hope they never phase it out, this shift suits me fine". (22)

While the women voiced demands which would materially assist them in combining waged and domestic work (plus, if they were lucky, a small modicum of time to themselves), their most immediate requirements certainly involved the removal of those means of punishment with which they were so seriously abused. This need lay closer to the category of collective defence than advancement and indeed, it can be argued that the former was a necessary precondition for the latter. Both aspects, the need for 'disarmament' on the one hand, and positive orientation on the other, were simultaneously entwined within the telling phrase - so often repeated:

"As I've said before - it is a woman's factory, and most - the biggest majority are married and have responsibilities at home". Pip (Sub-Assembly) (23)  
Emphasis in original.

"We want these rules abolished ... it's not going to stop absenteeism - because of the problems that come up! It isn't fair for them. It's unfair for the mother because you've got such a lot of things to do and let's face it, they're doing two jobs. Because it's not just a job where you finish here. You don't. You go back and you start again. And some days, I s'pose there's a lot of people - they have it on their mind all day - with children at school, wondering if they've got the housekey, if they've got all their stuff for sport. I think there's some women - keep on till 9 at night when they get back". Janet (Sub-Assembly) (24).

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The sense of injustice, and also the specific nature of their problem, was sharpened when the women considered the men's position. For one thing, they didn't have to deal with the same problems and responsibilities arising from the domestic relationship:

"I say its wrong, in a woman's factory. I mean you wouldn't find many men having days off, would you? I mean, you wouldn't find the men having many days off to look after the kids - even when they've got children ". Pip (Sub-Assembly) (25)

Neither did men apparently, have to suffer the same kind of treatment within the employment relationship.

"I don't think there's any more absenteeism here than in any other woman's factory. You see, we say - here, they don't get so much understanding. I know my son, I mean he'll go down to personnel and explain something to them. If he's got his wife ill and he's got notes from the doctors - well, they'll tell him to have time off. But here, you know, its just ... they don't even ask them why they've been away. When you go into work, all they see of you is to give you a warning! To me, I think they should ask them why they've been away, and I think they should think about the reason". Janet (Sub-Assembly) (26). Emphasis in original.

Pip, who has the last word here - gave immaculate expression to the painful irony of the women's position as domestic and wage workers.

"I reckon if the women ... they shouldn't ... if the women don't come to work, they shouldn't abuse them like they do, they shouldn't have them in the office. If they don't want to work, they don't pay them. But you know the management's view on that is, we don't employ them to ... we employ them to make money out of them, not to be absent! But they don't pay them to be absent! So I don't know what they're grumbling for! They'd soon make you absent if they didn't want the work, and they'd got their stocks up. They wouldn't want you then!". Pip (Sub Assembly) (27).

The Costs of Stability

".... A lot of people try to get off the main lines but don't succeed, on health-lines. But there again - I think everybody has their off-days, don't they, you know. If you're really working hard, then its bound to make you ill isn't it? People, well, most of them take valium tablets. But I s'pose, like myself, when you've got a full-time job and then you have to go back home and start again, I s'pose it's not long before it brings you down is it?". (How many people do you know who are on valium?). "3 so far, on my line. But - quite a few don't speak about it. I mean, those are just people that I know personally. There's probably quite a few that I don't know, because not everybody speaks about their health or anything do they?"  
Edna (Final Assembly) (28).

It is clear from the previous discussions of the women workers' position in the labour process, that they were subjected to a high degree of stress from practically every aspect of it. Stress was engendered by the nature of the work and its performance under constant pressure and rigorous disciplinary controls. It was increased by movement of labour, constant speed-up and the intensification of work. And it was sustained by pervasive insecurity and high levels of intimidation generally.

Confirmation (if more is needed) that management's intensive utilisation of female labour was problematic from the workers' point of view might be seen in the occurrence, on at least two occasions, of mass hysteria in the factories. (29) (One of these taking place during the course of the study).

The toll on the women workers in terms of stress was well known.

"A lot of them suffer with nerves - the biggest majority of the factory ... you've only got to go to the hospital and they'll tell you - they've got reports of people suffering with their nerves. You've only got to walk into Corbett Hospital - they say 'You work at BSR?'. First thing they ask. It's got a black name". Pip (Sub-Assembly) (30).

And it was the pace of the work which formed the most readily identifiable source of this:

"The local doctors will say - the first thing they will say is, 'do you work at BSR?'. As a matter of fact, we had five doctors go round the factory about 2 - 3 years ago. And my doctor happened to be one of them. It was to see the environment in which we work ... he said it was the pace, the pace at which they were working."  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (31)

While the women interviewed certainly conceded the particularly stressful nature of their work, they were less inclined than the doctors to consider this the sole source of their ill-health and disease. "Nerves - quite a number. But you always have it - it's not just this place, I don't think". Pru (Sub-Assembly) (32)

Every person interviewed produced examples, from among those they knew, of women put under particular pressure as a result of their home circumstances, quite apart from 'every-day' problems like sickness and ill-health in the family and simply having too much to do.

"She's 59 - her daughter's 20, and her son's 17 - her 'usband works daily but ... 'e spends 'is money on booze. She's never got any money for bills - I mean, she should be retiring, but there's no way she can retire, no way! 'E spends 'is money on booze and gambling - and she's never got 2 'pennies to rub together on Monday - at all. And when the bills come in - she just 'as a fit! ..... an' 'opes that something turns up. At the moment, it 'asn't affected 'er ... well, when I say it 'asn't affected 'er - I'm a-lyin'. She smokes from 9.30 until 3.30 - non-stop, never takes a cigarette out of 'er mouth at all! And she's got one speed which-I don't know whether she's on tranquilisers or not - but she's really slow. But it doesn't jeopardise me line so - I don't interfere".  
Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly) (33).

Half of those interviewed related occasions when they had been seriously stressed and/or depressed and had been given 'nerve pills'. (34) (Although this question was not specifically asked of them and more may have taken tranquilisers at some point in their lives).

That both employment and household relationships, as well as the manner in which they were combined, must constitute focal points of women's struggle to change their circumstances is perfectly clear from the toll of stress and fatigue exacted. This finds no parallel with the men.

"There's 4,000 women 'ere - 3,999 have nervous disability ... all over the factory ... you'll find the majority of people are on pills here - tranquilisers, black and green capsules, the pinky ones ... they're all on.

I've got 3 on my line now - there's J \_\_\_\_\_, P \_\_\_\_\_ and D \_\_\_\_\_. The one - 'er 'airs fallin' out. And it is, it's the pace and the tension here - you know, it's one big rat-race here".  
Jill (Final Assembly - Supervisor) (35).

(Do you know women with bad nerves?)

"Oh yes, quite a bit of that around". (How many do you know?) "Numerous people, numerous. It's the pace of life today - pace of life .. you hear these ladies that have been - because they go to the doctors and they give them valium, librium - doesn't seem to hurt them. Because I know for a fact, one young girl, oh, a woman we'll call her now, whose been on valium for well over 10 years. So whether valium ever affects them over a period of years, I don't know...." Pearl (Sub-Assembly-Convenor) (36).

"Oh a lot of them on the line, they've all got bad nerves - if you hear them, they've got tablets for their nerves ..." (Other illnesses?) "Nerves mostly nerves. You know when they go to the doctors - nerves, or they're exhausted or something".  
Nora (Final Assembly) (37).

"As a matter of fact, I've got one girl up there, and she's done nothing else - and it only happened since she's been at BSR - and she's disabled. She's in the disabled team now, through it".  
Pip (Sub-Assembly) (38).



The women workers' responses

The women workers were not rendered totally passive victims in relation to their problems as a result of managerial strategies. The latter encountered continuous opposition from the workforce and the women's resistance took a variety of forms.

There were numerous work stoppages. Most frequent were "downers" - individual teams or sections downing tools for a short while, but remaining at their stations - for example:

"It was stupid really - our head of department snatched a flag, that a woman had put up, you know - how pathetic can you get? It was Jubilee day, and everybody had decked up you know, but our particular superintendent didn't like it. And he snatched it down - but he jolly well put it back up again - he was man enough to go and put it back up again! Because everybody stopped work! (laughs). They just stopped work ... so silly! You know, isn't it really? But that was a male action wasn't it? It wasn't the women! I was just too disgusted to speak!"  
Sally (Sub-Assembly) (39).

There were also, on occasions, mass walkouts:

"A couple of summers ago, it was very very hot. And there's only about 2 or 3 windows in the room where I work ... and it was about - it was 98 degrees. So, every afternoon, we got up and walked out. Put our coats on, and went home. And they couldn't understand why, you know. So, we told them that it was inadequate ventilation - now their attitude to me wasn't very good, but - we did get some more ventilation in, the following year. It was ... we had lots more fans, and extractor fans all over the place - and we haven't had a summer like it since! So, whether they'd be effective, I don't know. But we walked out, several times." (Did they penalise you for that?)  
"No. Well, there was too many of us. If it had been just me, you know, I s'pose they would've ... although they couldn't 'ave done really, because my women would've ... you know, they would've stuck with me. Well, they did do. They just saw me getting my bags ready and ... off I went, and they trailed out after me - there was no way that I was going to work in 98 degrees! Half of our room went, and the other half stayed. And some of the main lines downstairs walked out as well". Sally (Sub-Assembly) (40).

It was not always the case however that withdrawal of labour on a mass scale was as orderly as this. Quite frequently, "wild-cat"

strikes occurred which developed close to riots. The Branch Secretary remembers the occasion when the women workers at Old Hill discovered that the men had received a bonus which had not been extended to them, in a wage deal, which was supposed to establish equal pay. The women's action was successful but:

"It was terrifying! They got a chap by the legs, and they were dangling him over the staircase. The afternoon shift came on, and they were told there was no strike and to work normally. But these kids went around, whipping the chairs out from under them as they sat to work on the lines. We met the company, they wanted to see what would happen. I told them they should get the police, someone was going to get killed". Mary West (Branch Secretary) (41).

At a less dramatic level altogether, the women workers at BSR looked to a variety of other strategies to resist and regulate the worst effects of management's exercise of power. We go on to examine some of these.

#### INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES

Albeit, at an individual level, but on a mass scale, the women workers took pills, time-off or quit.

"Well, I think, in time, with the mass production and that and the atmosphere gets tighter, working all the time here, it sort of gets on top of people. I know there are a lot of people working on my own line, they're on nerve tablets, valium tablets, and things like that you know. It's a big strain really you know ... It gets them down that much that they have to pack in, in the end. Yes."  
Edna (Final Assembly) ((42)).

Taking time off as a response to the pressure of work was commonly recognised and understood, but it was most often associated with the younger girls rather than older married women -probably because the latter were more likely to have resort to specific domestic circumstances as the main reason for their absence.

(Is pressure of work a reason for absenteeism?)

"I should say it is, it's very tiring - I mean, today myself I could have done with an extra day in bed, you know. It is very tiring you know. It is a push really, to come out some days, you know, you get very tired. It gets worse towards the end of the week - I was exhausted this morning." Edna (Final Assembly) (43).

"Really. Everybody - when work gets on top of you ... to me, when work gets on top of anybody, they have a day off. They come back to work the next day and they're fresh as a daisy. But of course, they don't - management don't think like that." Nora (Final Assembly) (44).

(Reason for absenteeism?) "They're fed up - fancy day off. Some feel bad. Quite a few just fancy a day off. They're more open today, they will admit they fancy a day off for themselves - more so than they would a few years ago". Ethel (Final Assembly) (45).

But time off could entail pressures of a different kind:

"Bad nerves is common - I know about 6 on pills. It sometimes involves them having time off. They don't go to the doctor's every time, so they get hauled into the office ..." Sally (Sub-Assembly) (46).

Apart from being seen as a coping strategy, taking time off (or quitting) employment as a response by workers to their working conditions, is also, of course viewed as a form of resistance to these. In this example, the two aspects are clearly combined:

(Reasons for absenteeism?)

"Well, I don't know. Sometimes its because of their home life, and other times its because they're fed up of the job or something like that. ... One of the ladies' presses was moved. It used to be turntables and now its on forming mainplates. Well when her press was moved you see, her job was finished. Well she hasn't followed her press and gone onto main plates she's like - all over the shop. And last week she had 2 days off, and I said to her husband - 'what's the matter with Leah?'. And he says, 'Her's fed up! Fed up with the set-up here! And I said, 'really?' and he says, 'Yes - because she's moved around'". Sarah (Press Shop) (47).

As a form of resistance, individual workers 'spontaneous' actions in terms of time-off or quitting tend not to be seen as a means of

regulating or modifying the conditions they are a response to. Such assessments of effect do, however, need to be made in the context to which the actions apply. (48) Certainly, the threat of(individual) absence on a large scale as a response to management 'breaking the line' for example, was aimed at preventing this from being carried out; and might well be effective, (depending on other circumstances) as the women well recognised, because of the disruption it caused: "If people think the line will be broken that day they won't come in". Ethel (Final Assembly) (49).

The connections between 'resistance', 'coping' and 'regulation' strategies can be explored more fully perhaps, in relation to two forms, so commonly used they appear to have been part of the general shop-floor culture: the system of cooperation or 'mutual aid' and 'compartmentalisation'. The first points towards the collective identification and social support which the women workers continuously developed as an integral aspect of their work-group relations. This was in addition to, while at the same time it extended beyond, the collective mutual regulation (also continuously developed) within the technical job context. The second was an 'individual' strategy which, nevertheless, required - as much as it also pointed towards - the need for, workers to control their jobs in order to maintain their health and their capacity to labour.

"I've never got time to be ill... I haven't got time to be ill - at all. Even when I am ill you know - I still carry on. But there again, there's 'undereds of women exactly the same. They 'ave GOT to, they can't afford not to." Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly) (50).

"They all, all of them, if they come in, and one of them's got a cold or an off-day - I've got to be fair to them, I mean, I can't be any otherwise - they're very good in that way. They say, 'take it easy, we'll do half of that' - they help. You feel below par, and they don't let you do everything".

"... M.\_\_\_\_\_'s husband, he's never given her a wage .. She's never had a wage off him. She's always lived on what she's got from here. She's found it very hard ... But the girls all share and help each other.

Like, you hear 'I've got to go and buy a little tin of paint and all I need is enough to do so and so'. 'Don't buy any, I've got some!' And the next morning you've got it, they bring it. Or they say, 'I'm going out on Saturday night and I could do with buying myself another dress, but I can't afford one - I could do with something for a change. 'Well, I've got so and so you can borrow it if you want it!' And its there the next morning!' And they'll always offer lifts around if they hear you're going somewhere .... "

Jenny (Final Assembly) (51) (emphasis in original).

It would appear from the interviews, that at a personal level, the women commonly used compartmentalisation as a coping strategy. Keeping separate the two spheres of their lives in order to contain the pressures of each and to prevent 'spill-over', which might otherwise threaten an uncontrollable build-up of stress. The following two conversations make this procedure quite explicit.

(1) (Tracy, do you think about BSR when you're not at work?)

"No! No I don't. I'm sorry I don't. I clock in at 8 o'clock and I finish at a quarter to five, apart from attending branch meetings - when I finish at quarter to 5, I finish! And I don't talk about it ... I never discuss anything at home".

(You don't take worries home with you?)

"No, no, no, you have to ... You can't, because as I said, you've got everyday pressures of your own at home anyway, and so you've got to shut off haven't you? Otherwise, you'd get the two mixed up, and then you would be landing up with having a nervous breakdown, so - the only thing is, you shut off. You've got to shut off... So that's what I do".

(Do you shut off your home-life when you're at work?)

"I shut out a certain amount when I come out the house in the morning. I shut out a certain amount, for the simple reason, they know where I am if they need me. I mean before now, my daughter's come up here, you know. I shut off, because I know I can't combine the two. As I said before.. Oh well, let's face it, when you're working in the day-time you know, you think about a few things, things do crop up and you do think about it. But you have to shut off a certain amount."

Tracy (Final Assembly) (52).

(2) (Edna, do you worry about your job?)

"No. When I go home I cut it off altogether. I think you've got to make your self have some sort of relaxation. There's a few - well one night in a month - we go to the shop stewards meeting at St. Michael's Hall, and that's the only time out of working hours that I have anything to do with the work. Otherwise I shut it off completely. Well, you don't seem to be home very long anyway, before you're back here!"

(How does your home-life affect you at work?)

"Well, when I'm at work - there again, I try not to think about home. Because - I think if I thought about home I'd be thinking, 'oh, I've still to go back and do it now', you know. I think it would depress me if I had to stop and think about home. So there again, where I cut off work when I get home, I cut off from home when I get to work. I get stuck into me job or talk about anything - so you don't really think about it". Edna (Final Assembly) (33).

But it was only possible to compartmentalise effectively, if the pressures in either sphere were not too great, because the process required a level of detachment which was difficult to attain and easily broken down. Carol, for example, was worried about her job on mats for a time:

"Yes, yes I did all the time yes. Worried at the time, worried thinking have I done it right? Well I knew I couldn't do the mats, and they kept me on for a bit and that worried me, knowing that it was rubbish I was doing." (That worried you at home even?)

"It did when I knew I couldn't do me job right, you know. But when I was put on the deflashing that I'm doing now - I don't worry over that because I know that, in my mind, I'm doing me best and I know that.

... that's why I like the job that I'm doing, because I can forget it, you know. I mean, I enjoy what I'm doing, that's why I said, I'm not bothered about being in any other department". Carol (Moulding Shop) (54).

In the workplace, as we have seen, many aspects of management's policy would have the effect of destroying an attitude of detachment towards the job - for instance doubling-up and movement of labour.

Tied, as the operators were, to the rapid repetition of detail tasks, these changes destroyed the only respite which could possibly be found in such work - the hard-won 'reward' of habituation in their jobs, i.e. the achievement of a level at which work at the requisite speed was accompanied by a sufficient degree of relaxation to render it relatively less stressful. While both of these systems - mutual aid and compartmentalisation - can be viewed, essentially as strategies for coping with the impact of working conditions rather than altering them, they both, nevertheless depended on the ability of the workers concerned to establish and maintain job controls. Not only, as we have suggested, to reduce personal stress, but also in order to redistribute the workload, so that the workers could help each other.

We go on now to look at those of the women workers' responses which were aimed explicitly at regulating crucial aspects of their working conditions - not only in terms of their impact but also their application. Again, we note that the effectiveness of these means of regulation largely depended on whatever level or degree of control over the job the workers could sustain. On the other hand, these regulatory strategies themselves were aimed both at enabling the further development of controls over the job, and defending those already in existence. Since the main drift of management's production and labour policy was, precisely, to undermine their position to do either, we find that the main efforts of the women workers addressed this policy centrally. We look at their attempts to regulate the pace of work and to resist speed-up. Since this required the regulation of disciplinary offensives and also movement of labour, we go on to examine some of the women workers' responses in respect of these.

"YOU'VE GOT TO PACE YOURSELF"

Tremendous pressure was put on the women to work at the fastest possible rate and was not reduced in the periods of slack demand. This was because first, unit costs remained crucial when production was for stock (prices might have to be lowered in order to clear it); secondly, management feared they would be unable to increase the pace again once it was allowed to drop. This strategy, however, did not meet with total success.

On individual piece-work jobs, for example, workers such as Janet resisted the pressure exerted through the incentive payment system, in a manner similar to that documented in accounts of piecework payment systems elsewhere.

"I used to worry about it, you know. Worry about working - mainly keeping up the count. You get into a routine of doing the same count. Now, I don't ... if I don't get the count out I don't worry about it. As long as I'm doing the job right, I'm not bothered about the count now. I think I've got to the stage where, you know, you can only earn, like so much. And it's better to stay on one lot of money and then you know what you're going to do with it. You've got the same amount coming in every week-end and it doesn't worry me now".  
Janet (Final Assembly) (55)

This example of an individual piceworkers' decision to opt for a certain level of earnings - and (therefore) output - cannot be generalised too far because large numbers of workers were on fixed counts/performances, or 'no value jobs', or else they operated in closely coordinated teams. Here, we look at attempts to regulate the pace of work on the final assembly lines which involved more than 60 people.



It is clear that all workers regulate their output to some degree. Nora's line of part-time workers was more co-operative to management than most, but this didn't mean the latter had it all their own way:

"They (the workers) thought that the value wasn't enough for the money and I don't know, I think it was something that they talked about amongst themselves. And they said as they'd only send 200 an hour up, it wasn't worth sending any more. And then I think there was a bit of a showdown. They (the management) wanted 220 an hour. And then ... we compromised and said we'd do 210."  
Nora (Final Assembly) (56)

Making the decision between effort and earnings within the limits set by any given payment system is a much more complex process where teams of workers are involved. Edna describes the difficulty of achieving a consensus.

"I mean, you get so many girls saying, 'Oh, its not fair,' but they don't stand up to it you know. It is stupid really, its not worth the money how they dash - its better to take your time, there isn't really that much difference in the money."  
(But here, they just keep going fast?) "Yes, they do, they just don't ... They moan about the money, but they won't back it up. You know, they wont sort of ... they want you to tell them - but if you go round and tell them, then they want you to pay their difference on Friday, you know what I mean? It's really complicated. That's how I think of ... they know what they want, they've moaned about it, but they don't do anything about it. I mean, if you're gonna do anything - how long are you? - 67 people. Now, you depend on each other that is every one - they're a team. Now if you get a quarter of a team that wanted to stop rushing and to do a "normal" week, you know just to their own speed - then you'd get the other part, where they say they're gonna get the piecework out - then you get another part where they say, 'Oh well we don't care!' So ..... If you're gonna do any-thing like that, well you've got to stick together as a team, and you don't always get this."  
Edna (Final Assembly) (57).

The difference between establishing a pace of "normal working" and a "go-slow" is largely a question of degree since the process of regulation is the same. Restricting output is often used as a means of achieving some other specific and commonly agreed aim, which as

Barbara indicates may make it easier to sustain.

(Have your line ever decided its not worth getting the count and gone slow?)

"Yes. They've done it quite a few times".  
Say they were doing 130 - 140 an hour, they've dropped down to about 100. But then, like, all the girls won't stick together. The front ones are going like mad and the back test have slowed down, then there's just a great big block of work waiting to go through. But then they get fed up of going slow because they've got no work, and so they start to do it again".  
Barbara (Final Assembly) (58).

The only time they succeeded in keeping up a 'go slow' for any length of time was 'when the whole factory's on the go...'. In a dispute the previous year (1977) line workers in all the factories had kept up this action for several weeks.

"Yes we did too. I think that was on the wages - they did it for about a fortnight, I think, but then the threats came out, of redundancies and short time, you know, and closure of the factory. They couldn't afford to lose their jobs".  
Barbara (Final Assembly) (59).

This dispute provides a good example of these workers' use of output restriction as a means of resisting management's attempts to intensify work, in the first instance, and then as a means of applying a higher degree of regulation over the 'normal pace' thereafter. The centre of this action was the Old Hill factory, which appeared to be the main focus of management's efforts to cut production while maintaining the pace of work and avoiding the payment of waiting time. In all factories recruitment had stopped and movement of labour was being used to a greater extent, together with work intensification, in order to carry out production with a smaller workforce. But in particular on the main lines a continuous supply of bad parts - which cut out waiting time payments, had made the work more difficult, and resulted in a higher number of rejects. This had led to a considerable drop in performances and, therefore, the women's wages, especially at Old Hill.

"The lines really got their tails up, and then they had a go slow. The girls on the lines thought they were being unfairly treated. No matter how much work they did their wages never seemed to get any higher, so they decided to take things into their own hands. And they found out that by working steady they weren't that much worse off in their wages".  
Ethel (Final Assembly) (60).

Despite a short stoppage, the situation did not improve. And following this adoption of a 'go-slow' specifically as a protest, 'normal' working was never really resumed in this factory. The women continued 'working steady', that is, they established a new and lower level of 'normal working'. Faced with what appeared to be a 'spontaneous' (61) yet concerted drop in the count which lasted well over a year, management were finally forced to consider re-vitalising the incentive element in their pay system (which they did in the wage deal of 1978).

(How much did count drop?)

"Well we're capable of 2,000 per day on average. Now we're doing about 1,800. But over the last 12 months, 2 years, the counts really have gone down a terrific amount. Well I've seen a time when out of those 7 full-time lines, at least 5 of them would be doing over 2,000. It isn't happening now".  
Ethel (Final Assembly) (62).

Whatever the specific conditions, it is clear that the process of regulating the pace of work on a collective basis was much more complex than for one worker alone. On the other hand, as we have seen, the successful operation of management's production policy required a high degree of cohesion, mutual coordination, and regulation by the work groups. And where the pressures of inter-dependency - whereby workers tended to drive each other - required, on the part of teams (as it did of all to some degree) collective efforts to ameliorate this impact on each individual, these controls derived from the same sources of mutual regulation and coordination.

Apart from these sources of regulation deriving from workers' relationships with each other, there are also those which derive from the workers' relationship to the job itself. Information and knowledge, together with skills picked up while doing the job are essential elements of control over work-effort, thus we have noted overall that workers develop and utilise job controls to both facilitate the execution and flow of work, and also to regulate the expenditure of effort entailed. In this labour process the need for the former was heightened by the degree of fragmentation and interdependence designed to increase managerial control; while the significance of the latter was heightened by a labour intensive system which restricted the extent of machine-pacing.

Management utilised two kinds of control strategies which continuously confronted the female workforce in their attempts to regulate the pace and control their work effort. Movement of labour and disciplinary offensives undermined employment security and underpinned driving. Labour mobility in particular, by destroying job continuity and expertise, made speed-up and intensification harder to resist. And by disrupting the co-ordination and mutual regulation necessary in a collective process, it undermined protective strategies developed both on an individual and a collective basis. Domination and the use of disciplining was an important means of driving those on non-incentive, fixed performance jobs. And made the kinds of decisions, such as that made by the individual pieceworker in the first example, particularly difficult, because as has already been pointed out, the "incentive scheme" comprised much more of stick than carrot: the level of pace being crucially related to the level of intimidation management could sustain.

In looking at the regulation of pace and effort it is therefore, relevant also to look at the question of regulating the level of intimidation and movement of labour both of which underpinned it.

#### RESISTANCE TO DISCIPLINE AND DOMINATION

There were interesting differences, between the older and younger workers in their resistance as individuals to managerial domination.

"When they're younger, somehow they've got a sort of 'couldn't care less attitude towards the job that they're doing. They don't seem to be able to respond to the type of discipline that's necessary - to being told anything".

Pearl (Sub-Assembly - Convenor) (63).

According to Jill, the supervisor, the younger girls did, indeed, tend to display rather distinctive responses - at least towards immediate supervision.

"Well I went past a line one day, and this little girl - couldn't have been above 17, did turn at me and flout! An' I said to her, 'If I was your mother, I should smack your bottom!' And she says to me, 'And if you were my mum, I should put one on the end of your nose'. You know, well they do talk to the supervision like that sometimes, I mean, sometimes we're abused terrible! You know - some of 'em take 'em through procedure, but me - I just give 'em as much as they give me! Well, not swearing, because I've got 2 daughters, and I 'ope they would never turn out language like this - it's terrible isn't it! (laughs)"

Jill (Final Assembly - Supervisor) (64)

And the younger girls' greater daring and militancy is illustrated in Jenny's account of how her line of mainly older women were brought out on strike

(Have you ever been involved in industrial action?)

"When they've come out on strike then, naturally we've had to go with them. I mean - we asked if we could work, and they said, if we did that - they'd come and stop us forcibly! So we didn't take that risk."

(When was that?)

"It was last year, when there were one or two strikes - one over pay I think it was, something to do with the pay. And they'd said, 'we'll strike on different weeks - and my row said; 'CAN we work if we want to?' and they'd said we could: 'If you want to work you can'. And we found that it was the young kids really that were causing the trouble. THEY said 'if you work, we shall chop your hands off!' You know, 'we shall come round ....' so we ... well, to save any trouble - we'll go with the others, and that was the reason, Because there were a lot of people wouldn't have gone home."  
My emphasis lower case underlined, original emphasis upper case underlined.  
Jenny (Final Assembly) (65).

The basis for this difference in response and resistance was identified as lying outside the workplace. Janet commented on the difference in the generations:

"Although women are frightened more easily than men, I say the next generation of people coming into the factory - they aren't". (You think the younger ones are less...?) "Yes, I think they're not so frightened as what we were. And, I don't say I'm frightened or I shouldn't be shop steward, but I think some people are scared. I think they're not the people to turn round and tell anybody off."  
(Do you think its only in recent years?) "Yes, definitely, you can see the change in people. They don't work so hard, and it doesn't worry them if somebody comes and tells them to get on with it. You know, they don't ... they carry on. Which I think is a good thing. The older women don't answer back, they just sit there and take it". Janet (Sub-Assembly) (66)

Although within the generations there are differences too. Most notably, with regard to the financial commitments entailed in the home and family: this discussion concerned absenteeism. But similar points can be (and were) made about the difference in response to discipline generally.

"Well you don't get it with the men do you really, because they've got to come to work, you see. And a lot of the young ones - this is our biggest problem where the wages are concerned - they go home, they only give their mum £5 or £10. Let's face it, they've got £30 or £35 worth of pocket money. They think well, we're going to have 2 days off - and they have 2 days off. So of course .. I mean this is what's causing our headaches. More than anything. I ain't going to tell the management that they've got too much money. But that is what's doing it. But then again, if they paid their own whack at home, or if they had their own home, they'd have to come to work. You see that's why we get more cooperation off the young ones that are married and buying their own home, they've got to come into work because otherwise if they didn't come to work, they wouldn't be able to afford the commitments that they've got, would they - like if they were buying their own home? We have more problems between the age of 16 & 21 a lot more". Eunice (Final Assembly) (67).

The impact of marriage and children on a woman's position in the labour market has been noted already. The strength of this position clearly made a difference to the women workers' response in terms of their option to quit or to risk standing out against management.

(What about labour turnover?)

"In our shop its mostly the same people there as last year. As I've said, it's mostly older women. I mean, they can't just go out and get another job like a youngster can". Elizabeth (Machine Shop) (68).

"I think the older women tend to accept things a lot more than the younger women. I don't know if its because they've got a decent little job (they want to hang on to). The younger ones are that little bit more prepared to stand up for themselves, you know". Madge (Moulding Shop) (69).

There were also occasions when the women stood up for each other.

"A girl who was friends with the supervisor had a week off and returned straight back to her job. A week later another was off and when she returned she was had in the office and told she'd be moved off her job. The girls were up in arms and threatened to have a downer unless she was put back on her own job again". Nora (Final Assembly) (70).

The response of the workforce to management taking disciplinary action varied according to the degree the women could insist on 'fair' treatment, and stand out against petty tyranny, as in the incident of the flag above. But there is a lack in examples of groups taking action on behalf of individual members who were disciplined, which seems to suggest that protective strategies were difficult to establish and sustain in this area. One reason may have been because of the interest workers themselves had in maintaining the flow of work and the difficulties they experienced, as a result of disruption. e.g. the worker doubled-up felt 'penalised' by the absentee. But the main reason was, probably, that the level at which disciplinary policy could be effectively controlled, lay beyond the power of individual sections or work groups. This was certainly the case with regard to particular aspects of management's offensive, such as the timing and scope of purges, and attempts to shorten the disciplinary threshold. Effective regulation of management's disciplinary strategy, therefore, required a wider basis of organisation, and we need to look at that which was provided by the trade union.

#### Regulating Movement of Labour

The effects of movement of labour unilaterally and selectively imposed by management, on the workers' job controls - developed both individually and on a collective basis - have already been described. The main strategy used by the women to control its impact was to establish a rota:

"There's a section where mainplates go to have bits put on before going to the lines - it's known as Sam's section. One woman complained because she was always the one that was being sent over. So now they take it in turns". Kath (Paint Shop) (71)



Several, similar instances were cited. The rota was important because it removed the power of selection (and therefore, victimisation) from management and removed the use of movement of labour as a disciplinary tool. It thus helped to protect individuals, and to promote employment security. From the point of view of the group and the preservation of job controls, a rota helped to maintain stability in the social relationships underpinning these by ensuring equal treatment. As with other control strategies which were developed, the establishment of a rota in the first place, and subsequently the continual insistence on its use, required a certain degree of strength in the group. In this sense it was thus an outcome as well as a means of job control. But the position was contradictory. And the rota as a strategy of resistance was limited because it also facilitated movement of labour for management. So to some extent, the preservation of the group's cohesion was at the expense of other aspects of job control. Again we note, that as with the regulation of management's use of disciplinary power, while the establishment of a rota lay within the ambit of the workgroup, control over the policy itself lay beyond this level. We therefore require a view of the wider collectivity which is examined more fully below. We can refer to the impact of trade union organisation on the regulation of this practice, and also several shop floor-wide strike incidents which, from the women workers' point of view, had control over labour mobility at their heart. On the subject of maintaining the rota, however, it is interesting here, to look at an instance where the group relied upon their shop steward to do this.

It was as a result of speaking up on behalf of a few people on her section who were constantly being moved, that Janet became a

shop steward in the first place. A rota was formed at the time but it was difficult for the workers themselves to maintain it, because the section was large with many individuals and separate jobs. Janet as the group's representative was clearly seen as the guardian of the rota. When called upon as a shop steward to support two women who objected to being moved off their jobs, she refused to represent them. "They'd never been moved before, so they'd got to go, like the rest". Janet (Sub-Assembly) (72).

This raises the issue of course, as to why the union representative could not be used to prevent the movement of labour in the first place, and why she might have chosen to facilitate management's requirements - by operating the rota - rather than to oppose them. While these questions are addressed in the following chapters, here, we are interested to enquire why the choice this steward made - between fulfilling her "proper function" of taking up members grievances against management and preserving the control practice established by the group - was, itself, significant? We would argue that in prioritising the latter, Janet illustrates the continuing relevance of that function of the shop steward as a representative directly engaged in the regulation of relationships between workers - as a means of their (indirectly) regulating their collective relationship with management/employers. This, according to Hugh Clegg <sup>(73)</sup> precedes historically the function of the shop steward as a representative directly engaged in regulating the relationship between workers and employers/management through collective bargaining. But the conception is not rounded out in his work, in the sense that no view is offered of what impact direct bargaining relationships might have, in turn, on relationships between the workers (and between the workers and their representative).

In industrial relations literature, little attention at all is paid to the way relationships between workers are regulated. In the first place, this is because of the predominant focus on bargaining between agents of the union and the employer. Secondly, there is an assumption that the establishment of job controls involving workers' mutual regulation of activity and mode of relating was the prerogative of craftsmen alone. Craftsmen engaged, moreover, in the "outmoded" (though they never seem quite to disappear) practices of unilateral control - in which Industrial Relations practitioners have little interest beyond the specific problem area of "restrictive practices". (74)

Where non-craft workers are concerned the literature is not helpful in providing us with a view of the elected representative engaged in both functions. And still less in the relationship between the two. How are the processes of unilateral regulation based on job control, and joint regulation based on collective bargaining related? What consequences does each have for the other? Some of these questions are explored in Part Three above.

Some of the questions which have been raised

We began this Chapter by outlining the women's position as workers combining employment with domestic responsibilities and specifying some of the problems they faced. As a consequence of this dual role, we have shown how distinctive experiences of these workers shaped a set of demands which imply some fundamental change in the employment relationship, both at workplace level and beyond. We have also set out some further consequences arising from the workers' position in terms of the mode of utilisation of their labour in production. This was highly intensive and debilitating: it engendered

a further set of demands - for fulfilling work and humanitarian treatment. How are changes in both of these areas of workplace experience to be achieved? And what problems might be encountered by the women workers in their attempts to achieve them?

We are suggesting that, being positioned so as to absorb the costs of product market competition and instability (the deferment of which we have noted, most aspects of this labour process is designed to facilitate), had important consequences for the women workers' ability to progress their demands in either of the above respects. In what ways might this be so?

Clearly, the continuous pursuit by management of production policies in relation to female workers which aimed to defer costs onto this labour force which would otherwise remain to be absorbed and/or reflected in the price of the product, resulted in a highly insecure and unstable position in employment for the women. And as we have seen, the most significant impact of one aspect after another - the payment system, the use of discipline (selectively and in general) the use of labour mobility - was to undermine the development or maintenance of controls by which the workers might regulate job performance and the expenditure of effort. We are arguing that these controls were a necessary means of resisting speed-up and intensification of work. They served to strengthen the position of individuals or groups in the labour process and were the means by which their position in employment could be rendered more secure. Ultimately, therefore, these job controls constituted vital bargaining resources underpinning workers' attempts to both defend their situation and also, promote their demands for change.

In the last section, some individual and collective strategies and responses to the problems posed by management have been described.

In these examples, the workers' main resource in opposing or attempting to modify demands imposed on them, lay in their own strength. This might vary according to their position as individuals in the labour market and, in the labour process, according to the extent of individual and collective controls over the job and the degree of cohesion in the group. Indeed, these responses had, centrally, to be concerned with preserving the main elements of job control themselves: i.e. the individual workers' knowledge of the job, their special facility in performing it, and the cooperative and social relations developed between and within groups.

There was, however, another resource available to the workforce - that provided by the trade union organisation inside and outside the plant. Through this the workers had access to a wider collectivity and also the means of promoting their demands through the established channels of collective bargaining. We need, therefore, to examine how useful these institutional resources were, in relation to the problems experienced by the women workers on the shop floor.

Two important questions have already been posed for this analysis. The first concerns the impact of the sexual division of labour, by power and function, on the relationship between men and women workers. In respect of both areas we have identified as problematic for the women - the dual role or double burden, and their position/relationships in the labour process - we have noted how the structure of interests between men and women is differentiated along lines which may be significant for collective bargaining. What implications does this differentiated structure of interests therefore, have for our analysis of how far the problems of the women workers are addressed in organisational terms?

The second question which remains to be examined concerns the impact of managerial policy - regarding the utilisation of female labour and the absorption of costs by this workforce - on the women workers' bargaining resources. What are the implications of the women workers' position in the labour process for their ability to progress their interests and demands by institutional means? This, of course, is to repose the question: what is the relationship between (the processes of) unilateral regulation based on job controls, and joint regulation, based on collective bargaining?

A further question links both of these. Given that job controls comprise an essential bargaining resource for workers engaged in negotiating support for their interests, not only from the employer but also other groups of workers and their own organisational representatives as well, what are the implications of one group, whose interests may be cross-cutting, having more (or less) bargaining resources than another? If the male workers were, on the whole, differently placed in terms of being made to bear the impact of the employers' costs of production and also better placed to defer these themselves than the women, what implications follow for our analysis of how far the interests of either group are prioritised and pursued within collective bargaining institutions - or even outside them?

These are some of the questions which have been raised so far and we now turn to consider them.

CONCLUSIONS

Footnotes

(1) Writers such as Friedman (1977) and Rubery (1978) have noted how the costs of (in)stability may be shifted from one sector of the labour market to another as a means of maintaining stable employment relationships (by employers and workers) in the 'primary sector'.

(2) Not even if they were physically incapable of doing it:

"This woman has very shaky hands. She is now expected to hold very fine leads - like threads, and have good eyes - she's about 50. She has asked to be transferred. She's always asking to be transferred - and they turn round and say there isn't another job for her. And then you see a young one will come - onto a simple job. Well, why couldn't they put that woman onto that simple job?

This lady has a lot of time off - because she can't see to do her job, and she's being forced - she says: 'I shall have to leave'." Pip (Sub-Assembly) Ref 20/S2: 780-794.

(3) Ref 15/S2: 626-650

(4) Ref 26/S3: 173-203

(5) Ref 34/S4: 30 - 40

(6) Ref 7/S1: 816-858

(7) Ref 24//S3:89-114

(8) Ref 26/S4: 580-606

(9) Ref 24/S3: 271-321

(10) "I had a woman raging mad with toothache. She made a dentist's appointment by 'phone and had no card. The superintendent wouldn't give her a pass-out, so she came to see me. I went into the office and I went mad at him. I says, 'Look here Bob - that girl - she's in agony with her tooth - she had a day off yesterday'. I said, 'You've only got to go by and you can smell it'. Which you could actually. And he says, 'well she should bring me a proof'. I says, 'Alright then you let her have that pass out - and she can bring you the bloody bill tomorrow'. I was that angry I told her to do it, and she did.

He gave it her, but he made that woman worry all day, whether she was going to get out or not". Pip (Sub-Assembly) Ref 21/S2 850-880.

(11) Ref 21/S2: 820-850

(12) Ref 12/S2: 1-12

(13) Ref 5

(14) Ref 12

(15) Ref 24/S3: 100-120

(16) Ref 18/S2: 810-820

(17) Ref 17-18/S2: 749-833

(18) Ref 13/S2: 342-350

(19) Ref 8/S1: 626-654

(20) Ref 25/S3: 365-380.

(21) Two had young children at home and wanted to work a part-time shift. Edna (26) quoted above specified 8 - 12.30 so that she could see more of her 6 year old. Carol (31) with two children 8 yrs and 10 yrs preferred the 9.30 - 3.30 day. Of the full-time workers who had no children at home five more wanted to work shorter hours. The four (Barbara, (21) Janet (43), Lorna (52) Sally (43), who were married - so that they could fit in housework preferably around either a 9.30 - 3.30 or a morning shift. The single girl, Kathy (20) wanted to work 6 - 2 in the summer, so that she could have more of the day to herself.

Five of the 12 full-timers were satisfied with their hours. These were: Pru (58), husband and no children at home, Pearl (55) widowed and self-supporting, Pip (47) husband, but required to be self-supporting, Tracy (44) who had a husband and 2 children over 15 at home, but who chose for herself, financial independence as a priority and Sarah (39) who had a similar household, together with a very helpful husband.

(22) On the 10 - 2 shift Madge (35) divorced with 2 young children at home, needed the earnings from full-time work. Jenny (54) with husband, and 3 children all now over 15, would have preferred the morning 8 - 12.30 shift instead of the previously handy 9.30 - 3.30, because this would give her time to fit in her hobby between leaving the factory and making the tea. The two part-timers who did not want to alter their hours were: Jill (42) with two children over 15 at home, and Nora (57) with husband but no children now at home.

(23) Ref 24/S3: 100

(24) Ref 12/S2: 565-630

(25) Ref 19/S2: 718-725

(26) Ref 9/178-199

(27) Ref 45-46/S4: 430-441

(28) Ref 13/S2: 44- 90-

(29) In January 1977 there was an outbreak of mass hysteria at the new Garratts Lane factory. Approximately 40 women were rushed to hospital and another 150 were sent home after sudden illness - stomach pains, headaches, fainting and vomiting - struck women workers in the vacuum cleaner plant. The source was said to be



fumes exuded by the plastic moulding machines, but subsequent tests discounted this as a possible cause. It appeared that a woman had collapsed in the toilets with stomach pains - she was later found to have suffered a miscarriage. As the news spread round the factory, suddenly, masses of workers fell ill. (Coincidentally, time-study testing was being carried out in the factory's main production areas).

Management recalled a similar occurrence which had taken place three years earlier at the Waterfall Lane factory. It had started on the 'twilight' shift on the record-changer plant and spread to the motor accessory factory ('Eversure' a BSR subsidiary) next door. Women workers complained of sickness and headaches which were attributed to 'fumes' or 'gas', possibly escaping from the old mineshafts on top of which the industrial complex had been built. Outbreaks of illness lasted for a week, but no trace of toxic fume was found. In both cases rumours spread about the factories being haunted - by the spirits of dead miners and children buried in the mineshafts below. And in neither case were male workers involved.

Such outbreaks are recognised as being relatively common in the far East, where women work under similarly highly stressed conditions. Referring to this as a 'subconscious wild cat strike', Rachel Grossman (1979) noted that:

"Mass possessions in the factories usually occur during times of high production pressures, changes in the production process or other generally recognised tension. Incidents commonly begin with one worker seeing a spirit in her microscope, often that of her mother. The vision sweeps through the factory floor and suddenly several hundred women are hysterically weeping and writhing (...) Workers and management alike, offer many explanations for the epidemics, usually revolving around unhappy spirits or ghosts". But she states there is open acknowledgement of the connection with working conditions .

It appears that very little work has been done on the hysterical illness of workers in industrial settings. But contributions have been made by Phoon (1976) in Malaysia and Colligan (1979) in the USA. In this country there is an article by Maguire (1978) referring to an outbreak in Lancashire. Most studies refer to women workers (but see Delasnerie (1972-73) which covers male workers in France).

(30) Ref 26/S3 & 20/S2: 760-780

(31) Ref 26/S3

(32) Ref 9/S2: 65

(33) Ref 28/S3: 629-665

(34) Two had suffered a broken marriage. Two had suffered the death of a husband. One had suffered the death of a child. Two had suffered from serious depression after being left alone at home with a young child.

- (35) Ref 27
- (36) Ref 37/S6: 23-47
- (37) Ref 12/S2: 63-70
- (38) Ref 7-8/S1: 624-631
- (39) Ref 26/S3: 153-173
- (40) Ref 11/S1: 950-1000
- (41) Ref MW 19
- (42) Ref 13/S2: 44-90
- (43) Ref 13/S2: 56-
- (44) Ref 12/S2: 864-893
- (45) Ref OH 14/T2S1: 558-693
- (46) Ref 19/S1: 542-558
- (47) Ref 13/S1: 901-931
- (48) See Edwards and Scullion (1982) for similar arguments
- (49) Ref OH 14/T2S1:600
- (50) Ref JA 53
- (51) Ref 20/S2: 110-128 and 23/S2: 265-290

Jill, the supervisor, had herself, been a direct beneficiary of this kind of support. Her story recalls the best traditions of mutuality as well as the social and humanitarian roots of trade unionism lying deep in the history of working class organisation.

"I'm going back about 4 years ago. I couldn't tell you why I worried, but I used to bring it to work and get terribly upset - and I ... I'd cry sometimes. And then I was ... I was taken ill, I 'ad cancer of the womb - which was caused by worry and fretting. I 'ad my womb removed, and I vowed then that I would never ever ... well, I don't worry about anything now - at all. You know, I think, if its gonna do that to me, why worry, just accept things as they come.

When I first started worrying, and I started losing weight - but I just thought it was through fretting and worrying ... you know, I'd go 'ome, I think - and then, I'm talkin' about £25 I was taking' 'ome then - (now I'm more than that remember ...) and I couldn't make ends meet, no matter 'ow I tried. I 'ad a rent rebate, quite good one really, because ... I used to only 'ave to pay £2 rent. But then I'd got gas and electric, food, and I couldn't buy the kiddies clothes, couldn't do this and ... they were going without terribly - and I fretted and worried. And as I say, I would never ask for charity, I would never go to

social services, I mean ... I don't know why - they would 'av 'elped, probably - but I just couldn't. And then ... I was poorly here on the Monday, went to the doctors on the Tuesday, sent me to the 'ospital on the Tuesday afternoon; Wednesday, I 'ad to report in, Thursday, I was operated on for cancer of the womb.

... If I stay at 'ome, I'm worse. And I was back at work within 6 weeks, which ... being a supervisor, it was ideal because - I haven't got to do any 'eavy work, so - you know, after 6 weeks - took it easy, and ... I'd got good friends here, very good friends. Supervision - all the supervision - I was 'aving hampers every week ... they used to collect every week. I used to 'ave a hamper and money, and the girls on the line, they were fantastic - everybody was marvellous, you know.

... there again, this is BSR girls. I've got a lot to thank BSR supervision and operators, because ... they've been ... I ... I think that's why I never applied to social services. It was better for me to accept if off these girls, because I knew it was coming to me in friendship, than going - begging, you know. (And they kept you going for 6 weeks?) ... Oh they did, they were ... they were gold, and a couple of neighbours you know. Never 'ad a penny of my ex-husband - not a penny! But there again, we 'avn't gotta thank 'im, sort of thing.

But even now, I ... 8 years - I've never bought anything new - The girls at work ... But all the money I do get, see, I buy the kiddies theirs. They've 'ad more now - in the last couple 'a years - than they've ever 'ad. But we're 3 together, we've always worked together, the 2 daughters and myself - and they've been very good, you know - they've accepted the situation, they've never begrudged me at all, they've never thrown at me - "Oh so and so's 'ad this and so and so's 'ad that, ' we're close knit really, the 3 of us.

.... the doctor said - the cancer was brought on by the fret ... Not lettin' people know - the situation I was in, money-wise - financial difficulties and worrying that I was lettin' the children down. That was my main worry - I was lettin' them down, sort of thing. But 'e said, if I'd 'ave asked for 'elp, or gone in to somebody and ... got it off my chest, I would never 'ave been ill - at all". Ref 13-14 (S3: 367-444.

(52) Ref 8/S1: 825-860 and 9-10/S1: 946-967

(53) Ref 11/S1: 643-751

(54) Ref 12/S1: 680-720

(55) Ref 18/S3: 232-250

(56) Ref 7/S1: 565-589

(57) Ref 6/S1: 296-328

(58) Ref 14/S1: 852-870

- (59) Ref 14/S1: 870-880
- (60) Ref OH8/T2S1: 90-96
- (61) Yet not 'spontaneous' in the sense of meaning unorganised.  
As has been explained above, the process of output regulation requires a high degree of organisation. At Old Hill, where a smaller range of cheaper units was produced at high volumes, problems posed by management cutting production were felt both more acutely and also more generally across all the assembly lines. The "common response" was, therefore, to a commonly felt experience, and it was less difficult to achieve a consensus.
- (62) Ref OH 16,17/T2S2: 310-330
- (63) Ref 32/S5: 394-405
- (64) Ref 11/S2: 207-220
- (65) Ref 28-29/S2: 620-640
- (66) Ref 12/S2: 630-650
- (67) Ref OH 21/T 3S1: 900-
- (68) Ref OH 3/T1: 332-340
- (69) Ref 32/S3: 694-709
- (70) Ref 17/S2: 529-590
- (71) Ref 29/S2: 419-425
- (72) Ref 10/S1: 740 and S2 102
- (73) Clegg (1980) p. 20. See also chapter 1 above.
- (74) Consequently, there is more to be found in the labour history literature, although here discussion is almost totally concentrated on the activities of craftsmen - a very small group e.g. Montgomery (1979).

PART THREE

WOMEN IN THE UNION

CHAPTER 10

UNIONISATION

In 1970 following a ten year period of increasingly rapid growth in the numbers of women in the workforce, a third of whom were now unionised, the proportion of female union members to male stood at 25% over all. The proportion of women in the GMWU was much in line with this, although here the rate of increase up to 1970 had been faster than the average. It was not as fast, however, as that of this union's major rivals in two important spheres of recruitment: in particular, NUPE in the public services sector and the TGWU, in manufacturing and private sector services.

Clearly, it was to women workers the unions now had to look, in order to gain ground in the membership league table. In 1970 membership of the GMWU topped 800,000 for the first time. By 1975 it stood at 873,351, over 1969's 793,853; and women accounted for 66,000 (83%) of this 79,498 increase. David Basnett, the General Secretary, was looking for one million members by 1977. No union could stand still on recruitment and hope to retain its status and influence in relation to others bargaining in the same sphere - where the number of seats at the negotiating table depended so much on the size of its membership.

Among the ten regions which constituted the GMWU nationally, much the same kind of considerations regarding their size and relative influence (both inside and outside the union's structure) could be said to apply. Birmingham and the West Midlands with 100,000 members ranked third largest overall. But with a heavy

concentration in the stagnating engineering sector, they seemed in the early 1970's to be standing still in comparison with, for example, up-and-coming Liverpool where significant membership gains had been made in the local authorities. In Birmingham there still remained, moreover, one or two large and ununionised engineering firms - BSR and JCB numbered amongst them.

With 8,000+ employees, BSR was an attraction no union in the area could ignore, but while Dr. MacDonald was in charge none could succeed in gaining recognition. Despite his virulent opposition, union members did exist in the plants, however. Skilled men continued to hold union cards even though they had no negotiating rights, and pockets of unionised workers sprang up occasionally on the shop floor.

"Two unions started recruiting outside the gate. They gave out leaflets...(fewer people worked here then). We decided to join the G & M. We filled in slips and we had a collector - used to do it secretly. Then after about a year, management recognised the union".  
Lorna (Final Assembly)(1)

"They paid union dues - if anything had gone wrong the union couldn't have come in then and fought for them, because there was no agreement".  
(How many joined prior to recognition?)  
"80 would be too many. Certainly not more... they were dotted here and there, about 20 at the start - in sub-assembly mainly... Two women in the factory started asking their friends if they wanted to join a union. One was a German lady... who worked on the motorline. The other was on sub-assembly. Just a few members, paying to these two, who were collecting stewards".  
(Were there any problems with management?)  
"No they didn't know, it was under cloak and dagger" (When it was secret, what did the other women think of it?)  
"It wasn't discussed. Those that wanted to join paid their subs... the union came and canvassed outside the gate".  
Pearl (Convenor - Sub-assembly)(2)

The TGWU also had a toe in the door, particularly in the transport section. As a result of dealing with unionised haulage contractors used by BSR, some of the Company's 'C' licence drivers had joined up. The regional trade group secretary was well-known in the area:

"It was Alan Law. Well, the Company wouldn't look at him!" (3)

In August 1969 dramatic events at BSR's Scottish factory in East Kilbride presaged the end of the Company's erstwhile industrial relations policy. A fifteen-week strike entailing violent scenes on the picket lines, a 2 hour sympathy stoppage involving 200,000 engineering workers throughout the west of Scotland and a mass demonstration at the factory gates, was ended with the intervention of the CIR and the Company's agreement to recognise the AEF. The fact of the settlement had immediate consequences for workers in the West Midlands factories. The terms of the settlement also had enduring repercussions. It is to the former that we first turn.

The recognition dispute at East Kilbride and union organisation in the West Midlands

"Whilst the bulk of the workforce may have been acquiescent and cooperative, it had certainly not been universally content". CIR(1970)p.12

The factory at East Kilbride reflected in its rapid development from the mid-60's onward the speedy growth of the Company overall. The workforce there had expanded from some 50 people in 1964 to over a thousand in two years. By 1969 it had doubled again and stood at 2,200, and in the same year a large new



extension had been added to the factory. Of the hourly paid workers, 1,800 were female and 300 were male. Women, therefore, constituted 86% of this labour force and a third of them worked part-time hours.

It was a consistent aspect of the Company's recruitment policy to avoid hiring workers from organised workplaces or industries, or those with any previous experience of industrial action. This policy, maintained to the present day, is carefully explained by the Stourbridge factory manager. As he points out, however, it had become more difficult to sustain during the late 1960's expansion - especially in respect of the male workers at East Kilbride.

"A lot of our labour is green... 'greenfield' labour. In other words, people who've never had jobs before coming to this - never had industrial experience before, I should say - and coming to this factory; and, therefore, they hadn't got the background to industrial...er, sorry! They hadn't got the background to industrial...um,...er, industry generally. And then - East Kilbride, they recruited a lot of their labour from the local factories... particularly males - and they brought in a degree of unionism".  
Barry White (factory manager)(4)

The dispute which sparked off the strike at East Kilbride began in the tool room, where there was already a history of poor labour relations. When the factory was first set up in 1964 the Company's policy was to develop this department in order to manufacture, rebuild and maintain tools and machinery for the whole group. Accordingly, 25 toolmakers were employed here at the end of 1965 and 32 by the end of 1967. The growing confidence and bargaining strength of this group of key workers soon prompted a change of company policy however, and in May 1968, as a result of this, eleven toolmakers were sacked at ten minutes' notice for

being 'trouble-makers'. (5) Letters were written, subsequently, by the AEF's divisional organiser, to which the Company failed to reply. Whereupon no further union action was taken.

Industrial relations did not improve during the next twelve months, and on June 21st, 1969, the Company suspended one of the remaining 20 toolmakers for 3 days for bad workmanship. All the rest (bar one) walked out in protest. When they returned, on 23rd June, they were all sacked and only the one retained in employment. Again the Company ignored the union officials but now the district committee decided to launch a major recruiting campaign amongst BSR's workers - at last it was realised they had to have the women workers in the union.

Within six weeks of the campaign 900 of BSR's Scottish workers had joined the AEF. Then, returning from the summer holiday on August 4th, the women found that the Company were instituting changes to the payment system, which included tying the minimum earnings level to a higher performance rate (i.e. bonus could now only be earned at a performance of 74 and above, instead of 66). Part-time workers were not paid on bonus at all, at this point. They simply earned an hourly rate based on the full-time workers' minimum earnings level. This basic rate had been increased - although by under fl - as part of the annual wage round; and so had the bonus increments, on a rising scale according to performance rating. So, although the proposed changes were incorporated with wage increases of some kind, the low level of these, plus the complex nature of the payment system and build-up of grievances, ensured that general confusion as to the likely

impact on earnings and effort was rapidly transformed into acute dissatisfaction. 20 women on one of the final assembly lines walked out on the morning of 13th August, and the District Secretary of the union, which had only just started recruiting, was now put under strong pressure to support them. The strike spread rapidly - particularly as it appeared the 20 had been dismissed - and soon well over 1,000 had joined the stoppage, many joining the union at the same time. (6)

The strike was approved by the AEF District Committee and the National Executive Council and was made official. Management took pains to explain the wage deal more fully and decided to include part-timers in the bonus scheme. They still refused to meet the officials, however, and the focus of the dispute quickly became one of trade union recognition. By the end of October, over 900 were still on strike and the Company was still attempting to continue production with only half of its workforce - including some 200 recruited after the strike began. Outside the factory hundreds of supporters helped swell the picket-lines and there were numerous violent clashes with the police. The case was referred to the CIR on October 21st.

The commissioners interviewed employees inside and outside the factory gates. They found a great body of grievances expressed by the latter and even among those still working, a desire to join the union, should it be recognised. Significantly, they noted:

"The most common reasons given why, despite their grievances, strikers had not previously left the firm's employment, were that the hours were convenient, they liked their work-mates, and they doubted whether they could get another suitable job".  
CIR(1970)p.11

The Commissioners recommended that the Company should recognise the union and during 12th and 13th November, detailed negotiations, lasting some 12 hours, took place on the terms of the recognition agreement and of their return to work. At last, it seemed, the ill-tempered dispute had ended with a victory for the strikers - they had finally broken through and gained trade-union recognition at BSR. But not from Dr. Macdonald! He had already made his exit from the boardroom and had been replaced by John Ferguson, a managing director who was prepared to work with the trade unions when he had to.

Indeed, even before the Scottish agreement had been signed, this preparedness was already being put into effect back in England. And as we go on to consider the process of unionization south of the border, the contrast is quite remarkable. In the course of half a year, it could almost, at first sight, appear that industrial relations practices in this one company straddled two centuries. In the aftermath of struggle and violence in the north, what major factors and considerations can be identified - at this early stage - regarding the subsequent direction and pattern of industrial relations at BSR in the West Midlands?

#### ORGANISATION IN THE WEST MIDLANDS : WHICH UNION?

Undoubtedly, the Regional Secretary of the GMWU in Birmingham had counted his union as a likely beneficiary quite early in the Scottish workers' struggle. And once the CIR had been brought in, passing Dr. Macdonald on his way out, the possibility of a recommendation for recognition seemed certain. So while his

recruitment officers at the factory gate handed out leaflets to a somewhat indifferent West Midlands workforce, Jim Mason found within, management far from indifferent: now they were willing to talk.

"They were in favour of this union - for some reason or other. I don't know why, but I think it was because they'd more or less got to come to it some time or other you know. So they favoured this one".  
Jim Mason (Regional Secretary)(7)

BSR's top management had obviously considered carefully the terms under which they might best be able to operate in conjunction with a trade union. Apart from their indigenous experience of industrial relations in Britain and awareness of the contrasts found in their main market, the USA; their considerations were also undoubtedly, well informed as a result of several years' close observation of their major competitors on the production side, based in Japan. Here, a rather different system of 'benevolent paternalism' could commonly be found: one which included, rather than excluded, union organisation. At an individual level, moreover, John Ferguson had himself worked in management in the Far East (Sri Lanka) before joining BSR. If such experiences, together with the years of Macdonald's anti-union autocracy, had failed to equip management personally in terms of traditionally recognised 'industrial relations skills' - this cannot be taken to imply an absence of ideas regarding the system they were now being required to institute.

"Well, the management presumably, at that time, decided that it would be much more convenient to have a one union factory - have a plant union rather than individual unions - and so they went into negotiations with the Municipal Workers to have 100%; or at least, any members in this factory would be members of

the G & M. So, therefore, if we were going to have a union, we had the best set of circumstances. We had a plant union rather than a craft union - and that's how it turned out."  
(So they more or less, chose the G & M - in a sense?)  
"No, the G & M definitely approached the Company. They decided that times had changed, and if... obviously the result of the Commission would lend itself to unionisation, it would come here anyway. So, we might as well accept the inevitable, accept the change, and... have the union".  
Barry White (Factory Manager)(8)

Once they were forced to accept a trade union there were a number of reasons why the Company should have favoured the GMWU quite apart from its reputation as a moderate union with a cooperative approach.

In the first place, BSR management clearly desired to deal with a single organisation which might cater for all grades of worker. Adhering to a company-union model encompassing all employees, they wished to avoid those problems which were frequently identified at the time with the patterns of multi-unionism, commonly found in British plants. Like, for example, the complex bargaining structures, inter-union (especially demarcation) disputes and heightened rank and file militancy generated by competitive pace-setting and 'catching-up' engendered among groups which were separately unionised.

In this desire for a single negotiating body the Company had found ready support from the CIR, an institution born of a movement long dedicated to the rationalisation of Britain's 'chaotic' industrial relations structures. At that time though, the prospect of being able to cover all employees neatly by one organisation was less viable than it is today. The large general and 'mixed' unions had not yet developed their staff or white-collar sections, and the tendency was to allow supervisory grades for example, to be organised separately ( eg. by ASTMS) rather

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than recruit them along with shop floor workers. This problem of inclusion or exclusion of certain groups in relation to the system of representation being set up-here in terms of where to draw the line regarding supervisors - was a question identified by the Commissioners as still remaining to be resolved when the AEF was designated sole negotiating body for all shop floor workers at East Kilbride.

There were, in addition, two other areas of anomaly, or possible contention, as to the "representativeness" or appropriateness of the union chosen, vis-a-vis the constituency it was supposed to cover. First, there were the craft groups not normally covered by the AEF; and secondly, those groups of ancilliary staff, such as canteen and transport workers, more properly the province of a general union such as the TGWU. The Commission had rather more sympathy with the first group of workers than the second. Of course, there was to be no interference with the craftsman's right to belong to the union of his choice! But the AEF would negotiate his conditions of employment.

Perhaps it might be suggested here, that if the CIR showed little interest as to the type of representation afforded to members-only a desire to see them tidily unionised - the Company was, possibly, more concerned - albeit from a particular point of view. It must certainly have been the case that they preferred it to be the skilled engineers who were, in effect, 'dis'- or 'mis'-enfranchised in terms of representation - if any were to be - through their incorporation into an alternative union organisation. To this extent, therefore, management's preferences must always have lain in the direction of incorporating all the skilled men within a general union which lacked craft traditions - resonant as these have tended to be with demarcation and status quo principles.

In the West Midlands, however, management could take advantage of their greater room to manoeuvre and they opened negotiations with the GMWU. Perhaps, in these discussions they also took cognisance of some further comments which had been made by the CIR in respect of the AEF at East Kilbride - this time, in terms of the kind of servicing a union might provide. For example, the commissioners felt that an effective union service to the Company would require a system of factory-based branches together with much use of, and ready access to, the full-time officials. (9) Neither of these could be said to be features particularly characteristic of AEF organisation. Moreover, with different historical traditions, large staff and resources devoted to administration, the GMWU could offer an array of personnel services (the region ran its own sick pay scheme, for example) impressive to the Company with its policy of minimalism with regard to personnel functions. (10)

#### BUILDING THE MEMBERSHIP

By February 1970, the recognition agreement which designated the GMWU as the sole negotiating body in respect of employees at the BSR's West Midlands factories, had been signed. Now what they needed was members. Even before this, efforts had had to be made at recruitment among the women in order to sustain a case for the GMWU, as averse to the other unions who had also recruited (or as in the case of the AEF retained) members. The GMWU recruitment campaign had, accordingly, been joined by management - whose powers of persuasion could usefully be backed up by their powers of deployment:

(Did you join?) "Reluctantly, we joined. And I've got to be very honest about that - we were asked to join the union. And - don't ask me the reason why, I couldn't give you one - but the majority of people on the shop floor, they were in the same frame of mind, they didn't want to join a union. I mean, what I know now and what I knew then's two different things but... we were actually blackmailed into going into the union.

We were sat on a job, and we were told, if we didn't join the union - if a girl came to work here, and she'd joined the union, she would be offered the job first - even though I was sat on it! So, let's face it, we were all frightened to death! - of losing our jobs - so we all JOINED the union. (Who was it who organised it like that? Was it the other workers?) Well, the people who told us actually - I mean, who approached us - they were to do with staff, if I remember rightly. They were the foreman - the foremen at the time. Whether they'd been told by the management or this particular union, I don't know. But... I'm glad I've joined now, but I still couldn't give you the reason why I didn't want to join". (So the management didn't object...?) "Oh no! Because it was the foremen who asked us to join the union, oh yes! And it was the foremen who were blackmailing us, so I should imagine the management was all for the union really". Jill (Final Assembly Supervisor)(11) emphasis in original.

This picture, contrasting so starkly with the unionisation of East Kilbride, was confirmed by management:

(Were the workforce very union-minded?) "No. No, we had to encourage them to join. There was very, very little interest in unions down here. Obviously, the craftsmen - the majority were in unions - so they had no interest in joining a union other than the one they were already in. So, most of the males, you could say, possibly 70% or 80% of the males, were already in unions anyway - by nature of their craft. So, they had no particular need to go in the union, they were already in one - there just wasn't any procedure to work to at that stage. But, the women, particularly - they didn't want... in fact, we had to practically go and say, 'Look! Have you filled your form in?' you know! And, 'Will you fill your form in?'... And we had to encourage them to go - because it was no good having part of the factory in, and not the other". Barry White (Factory Manager)(12)

On the union's side, undoubtedly the most effective action, from the point of view of winning members, occurred when the officials took up the case of a woman who had had an accident on one of the presses. The value of fighting on just such an issue, in recruitment terms, is, of course, fully realised. It is, in fact, a conscious policy, put into effect whenever the union requires to establish its credibility and circumstances allow.

"Anyway Paul Silver came down. As it happened I was in the plating shop at the time, and he comes over to me - about the union. And I says 'yes' I says, 'It isn't worth getting going in it'. Just like that! I says, 'It isn't worth it.' I says, 'That union!' And he says, 'Why?' and I couldn't answer him because I didn't know. It was only just sort of... I was more or less only having a joke - but I don't think Paul Silver saw it at the time! But anyway I joined. About a fortnight before, a woman had had her fingers off in the presses. And I said to Paul Silver, I says, 'What about that woman that's had her fingers off in the presses?', I said, 'are you going to fight her case?' Well of course he'd got to know, he'd found out more about it, and he come to me and he says, 'Yes' he says, 'we're fighting the case'. Well after that, I think that's what got the union going properly. They fought - I don't know what she got or anything like that. I know they got her something". Jim (Serviceman, moulding shop)(13)

As recruitment progressed and the firm expanded in size, the membership quickly outgrew the local branch into which it had been initially, enrolled. Indeed, the presiding lay officials had been exceedingly stretched to service the sudden influx of new members together with their inexperienced shop stewards. And in addition, BSR's management much preferred its employees to be accommodated within an environment solely devoted to the concerns of the workers of that one company alone. Once it

became viable to set up a separate branch for the three factories, nominations were taken for a full-time administrative officer. Mary West, from the cartridge section (sub-assembly) of the Stourbridge factory, was selected after interviews before the Regional Committee, and appointed in 1972. She, herself, had no previous union experience, but she was considerably aided in her work by the full-time official, who also presided over all meetings of the branch. (These were held - irregularly - every three months until July 1973 and bi-monthly thereafter).

By June 1974, 6,500 of the 8,800 shop floor workers employed in the three West Midlands factories, had been organised into the union: GMWU membership thus comprised some 73% of the Company's hourly paid employees. (14) The union's officials were, naturally enough, concerned to establish 100% organisation, and this was for historical, as well as the more obvious reasons.

In the Spring of 1970, four months after the BSR agreement had been signed, the GMWU had been involved in a dispute at Pilkingtons in St. Helens. This entailed mass disaffection and the formation of a breakaway-union after workers' efforts to bring in the TGWU instead, had foundered on Bridlington. For the GMWU, reverberations from this famous strike, were lasting. One outcome of internal soul-searching within the bureaucracy was the setting up of an Organisation Department at national level with the brief of, amongst other things, trying to ensure that work-places really were 100% unionised by the GMWU when they were supposed to be. Although support for the breakaway union (which was widespread and extended well beyond St. Helens), had largely

been fuelled by GMWU members, non-members were seen to pose a threat to the union's hold over plants they ostensibly organised. Moves to oust the GMWU from its position as sole bargaining agent were, presumably strengthened by non-members who felt free to join an alternative union. (15)

The Pilkington workers were all members of a single GMWU branch, over 7,500 strong, which was, before reorganisation one of the largest in the country. BSR, with its potential 8,000+ employees in 1974, bade fair as a rival, and the union's officials hoped it would not turn out by emulating its forerunner too closely. They remained concerned, therefore, about the level of non-members.

Enthusiasm for union recruitment seems to have diminished early on the part of BSR management. More importantly perhaps, the Company's expansion, together with its (normal) 'abnormally' high labour turnover, constantly produced a large flow of new starters, many of whom remained outside the union. The latter was, therefore, potentially the faster growing constituency. There still remained, moreover, considerable numbers of employees who were members of a different union (the AUEW & TGWU in particular): a circumstance which added to the danger of a possible movement to break the GMWU's sole bargaining/organisation rights - especially given the number of non-members as yet in the ranks.

Efforts to resolve this question were finally rewarded in 1974 when the Company wanted to discuss the question of redundancies. The results of these discussions were finally embodied in an agreement of December 4th. In return for union cooperation, the Company conceded a post-entry closed shop and thus, new starters would, in future, have to become union members within the first four weeks of their employment. The redundancy agreement also

stated that all non-unionists would be given a month (until January 8th) to join the union and any non-union members remaining would be the first to leave at the end of January. (16)

"What happened - I would say 80% of all the employees of the factory were in the union before the redundancy. And all it did was - part of the redundancy agreement preserved the 100% membership... and it was merely just one of the bargaining counters in the redundancy agreement". Bary White (factory manager) (17)

At the same time, negotiations began, regarding the organisation of staff into MATSA the white collar section of the GMWU. The Company was allowed to make extensive rationalisation of its staff sections first though, and, proportionally, more extensive redundancies occurred here than among the manual workers. After this, the 100% union membership agreement covering the staff was signed.

#### TERMS FOR ORGANISATION.

We now turn to examine the terms of the Company's recognition of the union, and the basis of their subsequent, bargaining relationship with the GMWU in the West Midlands. These were embodied in the 'blue-book' agreement which remained operable, in substantially unaltered form, at the time of the study. (18)

The contrasts which have been indicated between the two 'modes' of unionisation of BSR's factories in England and in Scotland should not, of course, be over drawn; since the struggle at East Kilbride was the basis of recognition in the West Midlands. But, given that there were also significant differences in the circumstances under which union recognition was negotiated, should

we not expect the terms of the settlements - in either case - to reflect this in some way? In the first instance, the Company (and the union) was apparently bargaining under substantial pressure; in the second instance, less so. If such an expectation seems feasible, it is not, in fact, borne out - at least, not in terms of the written agreements. In the negotiations preceeding the return to work at East Kilbride, the Company set out its terms to the union - for recognition, and sole negotiating rights and 100% membership. The results of these negotiations, assisted by the CIR Commissioners, were embodied in the agreement entitled 'General conditions necessary for a return to work' which was signed by the AEF. (19) The 'Blue book' agreement signed by the GMWU a few months later did not differ substantially from this- apart from being more fully explicated. At the heart of both agreements lay the clauses which protected management's principle of full mobility; interchangeability and flexibility in the use of labour. And a clause explicitly agreeing to this practice on the part of the union was included. There were no status quo clauses in either agreement: the Company explicitly retaining full freedom to change production set-ups and introduce new methods when required.

The agreements also provided for a procedure for resolving disputes, and this was spelt out in the 'blue book', as was the disciplinary procedure. Finally, provision was made for a system of shop steward representation and the setting up of a works committee for joint consultation between company and union representatives.



Whatever the respective work-forces thought about these agreements at the time they were negotiated is not recorded. There was, however, a short dispute over the return to work agreement at East Kilbride which may perhaps be taken to indicate something about the different interests and attitudes of the parties involved. It is apparent, for example, that the CIR's interest in the agreement lay in its procedural rather than its substantive aspects, in contrast to both management and the membership on strike at the time.

Although signed on November 14th, a hitch in the plans for a phased return beginning on November 18th occurred, when a mass meeting mandated AUEW officials to refuse to proceed. Workers demanded that the crucial clause relating to the jobs in which those returning would be placed, should be interpreted to mean that all returning employees should, without qualifications, be placed in their previous positions - where these still existed. The Company had not considered they were at all bound to do this under the terms of the agreement the union officials had signed:

"There shall be a resumption of all workers on Tuesday, 18th November, 1969, the management endeavouring to place returning workers in their previous positions. Due to re-organisation of production, this may not be possible in all cases; however, alternative work will be made available".  
CIR(1970)p.22 (20)

As a result of this dispute the return to work was delayed by a week, resuming once the Company had again reached agreement with the union officials. The CIR commissioners were rather miffed by this unexpected hold-up. They recorded in their report, their agreement with the firm's (i.e. employer's) interpretation of

the clause; along with their view that:

"(any) disputed cases could have been dealt with properly within the framework of the return to work arranged by the Company. CIR(1970)p.13

That the workforce, by and large, had taken a different view might, however, suggest, not so much that they had an improper grasp of procedures, but that they had a keener appreciation of the substantive issues embodied in the bargain negotiated on their behalf. In the first place, protection against victimisation is an obvious concern, of course, for strikers who return to work; in respect of this, management's freedom to deploy workers clearly had to be circumscribed. Beyond this, however, BSR's employees had experience, unmatched by either CIR or AUEW officials, of a company's production policy based centrally (and explicitly so) on the principles of labour flexibility/mobility. Their stand, en masse, against the terms of the return to work was also, at the same time, one against management's common practice.

This brief incident is the only recorded response by members to the agreements made by the Company with the unions concerned. The impact and implications of the terms under which recognition was achieved in the West Midlands factories are explored more fully in the following chapters.

The Impact of Unionisation : "more soap and more towels"

What were the benefits of unionisation for the workforce at BSR in the West Midlands? Making their assessment some seven years later, the shop stewards frequently made reference to the 'bad old days' - about which a whole body of stories existed. These constituted quite a mythology.

(How would you feel about working for BSR without a union here?)

"Oh no! Oh no way! I wasn't here in the days when there was no union, but I've heard lots of stories about... I couldn't possibly have worked under those conditions".

Sally (Sub-assembly)(21)

In comparison with the memory of the 'old days' it was apparent that there had been many changes and improvements:

"Our ex-convenor worked here - she was one of the instigators of bringing the union in, you know. And she said - it was terrible, they'd just come along and TELL you you'd got to work over-time, tell you what they were going to pay you, what you could do - you couldn't MOVE from your bench, kind of thing, you know - Oh, no."

Sally (Sub-assembly)(22) emphasis in original.

(How would you feel about working for BSR without a union here?)

"I don't think I'd like that. I didn't work here when there wasn't a union, but I've talked to people who did, and they said to me - 'If your face didn't fit, you were up the road'."

(What difference has the union made?)

"I THINK they can't just go and sack 'em now. But I can't think of any particular changes due to union..."

I once knew a girl who was Personnel Officer, before the union came. She left the job 'cos she couldn't keep up with them - they were sacking them

and stopping them and sacking them and stopping them - and it just got her down. She couldn't keep up with them, and she just packed it in. And because that was what I'd heard - when I just started here, I didn't think I'd be here two minutes!"  
Nora (Final Assembly)(23)

Certainly no-one questioned that there was the need for a trade union at BSR!

would  
"I think a lot of people/still work here without a union and its been here for a few years now. I don't think you appreciate just what the union has done. Perhaps that's the best way to put it. If we were without it, I think then we might appreciate it a little more".  
(What would be the difference?)  
"I think that we would probably be going home absolutely exhausted and on stretchers! I think they would certainly make you work a lot harder".  
Madge (Moulding Shop)(24)

Notwithstanding the mythology of the past, there was also the view that, if anything, the need for a trade union was even greater in some ways today, than it had been before. And once the perspective moved away from the needs of the past to those of the present, new (and sometimes unspoken) questions were also raised about the impact of the union.

(How would you feel about working for BSR without a union here?)  
"I don't think it would be very nice to work for them without a union now. One time it used to be, because - although I said Macdonald was a terror - whenever anyone got a rise such as the engineers, you knew damn well that Macdonald would see that you got that rise as well. But I don't think it would happen now. I don't think it would. I think it would be one of the poorest paid factories in the Midlands if we hadn't got a union now. I don't think the management - speaking personally - I don't think the management have got any interest in the work people here. I don't think they have. They're only interested in the work they can get out. They've got no sympathy for anyone here. Not this management.

Because there's some women - they're in that press shop, they're in the paint shop and they're in the plating too - they need the money. They're practically dying on their feet. And do you think they'd give them a lighter job on this moulding, or a lighter job anywhere else? NO. No chance for them. They'd rather that experienced person leave and set on another one, inexperienced, in their place then they'd give them a lighter job".

(Is it a problem getting transfers?)

"They can't get them. And yet I don't see why, if its a genuine case. I will admit that there's some of them who put it on, yes. But if its a genuine case I don't see why they can't give her a lighter job".

(Do you know someone like that?)

"Oh yes. My own wife. She suffers a lot with fibrositis now you know. And as I say, her ankle swells up a lot. Well I must admit that I haven't tried to get her a transfer you see. But I have asked her to ask the staff foreman to give her a lighter job - like in the same department - but he won't. He won't hear of it. They're just waiting for her to leave".

Jim (Serviceman, moulding shop) (25)

(What difference has having the union made?)

"Well they can't just sack you... MacDonald used to - sacked a whole section just because they were having a laugh - he sacked the lot. He was a tyrant, but he believed in good workers. As long as you were a good worker - they said - he'd never sack you here. But that wouldn't apply today. That wouldn't make any difference now, oh no!"

Janet (Sub-assembly) (26)

Clearly, an assessment of the union's impact has to be made against a background of present needs, as well as changes - some of which were due to unionisation itself. And in this respect again, comparisons with the past did not always result in validation of the present:

"Well I don't really know, because I've never worked for BSR without a union. But from what I've heard from the women that have worked here a long time -

they said that BSR WAS BETTER WITHOUT A UNION".

(Why do they say that?)

"Well they say that - like, when we're going to have a rise - they would go straight in and tell management and they'd discuss it and... Whereas now, today, you've got to go through UNION and all this lot, and if you don't agree with it then they... just get you the sack..."

Kathy (Paint Shop)(27) emphasis in original

Although the points are not made altogether clearly, what seems to be indicated here is a sense of reduced effectiveness in the workers' dealings with management which is associated with the loss of a direct approach, and the use of a representative and procedural system. We need to explore more fully some of the features underlying this observation; because such systems are, of course, a crucial feature of unionisation and the establishment of collective bargaining structures.

What were the more tangible benefits of unionisation from the workers' point of view? The males, certainly, could point to the establishment of a shift system which rationalised (but did not do away with) overtime working, and the introduction of recognised premium rates of pay for both; although this had never been extended to the women. ("We've always said we would never ask for the extra there".) (28)

On the whole, it was, of course, difficult for workers to assess what the position might have been:

"I came to BSR for a wage that was higher than any woodwork job I had before. So that wasn't the doing of the union in the first place. I now get slightly less than my equivalent trade outside of BSR... So in fact its slightly reduced - only because the vast amount of incentives and bonus's, etc. which have been

introduced into my trade outside of BSR.

But the union has brought in many improvements which might not otherwise have been here. A little bit more forceful in getting cleaner toilets and more soap and more towels, better fire exits - which make sense anyway".

Michael (Carpenter)(29)

"Well the management they muck you about NOW even with a union. So without one, you'd be pushed from pillar to post - and you'd get nowhere. We'd really have some trouble - there'd be some problems I should imagine.

(In the years you've been here have you noticed any difference the union's made?)

"The money's getting better and the rises seem better - I don't know about the conditions - they're a bit better than they were. It doesn't seem to be so... you can walk up a gangway without falling over something there, you know!"

Barbara (Final assembly)(30) emphasis in original.

Clearly, as the Company had grown, this had brought changes over the years - for better and for worse - and it was difficult to weigh-up the impact of the union. For instance, the system of performance rating had been developed around the time the union was brought in, and, while this might have been associated with some initial improvements in the women's pay, it was also linked with speed-up and the establishment of a higher work-rate.

But the union had introduced bargaining structures of a kind which had never existed in the Company before. A new system for representation and negotiation between the workforce and management had been established - and, for the first time, the means for collective bargaining on an institutional basis existed - backed by more powerful organisational resources on the workers' side than the Company's employees on their own could ever muster.

Edna, in her assessment of the union's impact, tried to take account of these developments in the context of other, broader changes.

"Its a bit difficult to answer, because I have worked here without a union - and it was great! But, like I said, there wasn't any mass production, and I should say that is what's changed it.

But there again, most of the cases that we do take up and that - aren't solved anyway, most of them, so... Well, they don't call in the union most times out of ten, so, its like not having a union really, isn't it?

I think, the only time that you really feel that there is a union, is when the wage negotiation comes up - and they negotiate your wage. But there again, we were ENTITLED to the 10% by government! And all we got off the union was just a productivity scheme, which we can't get anything out of! So there's no change whatsoever really!

I think its the mass production that's making it change. Well, its changed since the mass production. And, I don't know if the union's helped by making things so that you can't go in to talk to the management and get things sorted out. Because at one time you could. I can remember the time - when we've had a problem here and you felt that you could go to the management, even the personnel, and they'd say: 'Right, we'll sort this out for you, don't you worry', you know. You couldn't do that now".

Edna (Final Assembly)(31)

All the main aspects of collective bargaining have been mentioned here - representation and grievance handling, negotiation of claims and demands, and the procedural system - and in each case they have been viewed as problematic from the workers' point of view.

These are the issues which we are going to explore in more detail below. Moreover, we intend to argue that these features of union organisation and collective bargaining were, on the whole more problematic for the women workers than the men. In concentrating on the problems, it should be clear that there is no



intention to decry the need for trade union organisation in general, and especially not the achievements of trade unionists - rather, the opposite is the case. Nor, in concentrating on the problematic aspects for the women workers, is it being suggested that there were no problems for the men. Our purpose is to specify, more precisely, the position of the women workers in the union and in doing so, to offer some forms of approach and explanation applicable to all trade unionists engaged in collective bargaining, whether male or female. Finally, there is no intention to suggest that the problems examined here were due to the workers being organised in one particular union rather than another. It should be clear from the analysis that the relationships and processes examined have a much broader relevance. The Company was dealing with two trade unions: the AUEW in East Kilbride and the GMWU in the West Midlands. It is more useful to examine features of the firm and its workforce than to suggest explanations which extend no further than the boundaries of the trade union organisation alone.

"This particular union - in another factory down the road - is working great, all the members are satisfied with it and everything. I say, 'You're the union, and I am the representative... and we're at fault. We are the fault here - at BSR anyway'.  
Jill (Supervisor - final assembly)(32)

Except that we are not attributing blame, but looking for explanations which may help to shift it.

CHAPTER 10

UNIONISATION

Footnotes

- (1) Ref LG 5/584-650
- (2) Ref PB 20
- (3) Anon.
- (4) Ref BW 7/S1: 197-200
- (5) Apparently, they had attempted to negotiate wages with management.
- (6) "From the union's records it appears that about 1,450 out of the 2,150 hourly paid workers at the factory had joined the union at some time." CIR (1970) p.8.
- (7) Ref JM 13/S1: 838-845
- (8) Ref BW 8/S1: 222-236
- (9) Interestingly, the CIR do not refer explicitly to the service to the membership, but use 'the company', 'the factory', 'BSR', etc.
- (10) The commissioners were rather disconcerted by this minimalism, but they put it down to the company's rapid growth rather than deliberate policy.

"The success of the company's products in the markets of the world meant that management had to concentrate, to the virtual exclusion of all else, on increasing output. Success had meant rapid growth in the number of people employed, yet the management team had remained small. The problems arising from the needs and aspirations of a large number of people had been largely shelved under the pressure of the more immediate need to meet production targets."  
CIR (1970) p.12.

- (11) Ref JA 5/S1: 310-340
- (12) Ref BW 8/S1: 236-248
- (13) Ref JM 12/S1: 765-805

(14) <u>Factory</u>	<u>members</u>	<u>non-members</u>	<u>total employees</u>	<u>in union</u>
Stourbridge	3174	959	4133	77
Old Hill	2101	1032	3133	67*
Waterfall Lane	1179	387	1566	75
	6455	2378	8832	73

\* A higher proportion of male workers, many of whom retained AEF membership worked at this factory.  
 Source: Branch Officers Report.

- (15) See Lane and Roberts (1971):

"... the Rank and File Strike Committee handed into Pilkingtons just short of 3,500 forms instructing Pilkingtons to discontinue deducting GMWU dues from wages." p. 215.

"In all the GGWU (the newly formed breakaway union) received well over 100 inquiries, most of them from GMWU members." p.217.

Lane and Roberts do not discuss non-members' involvement. The GMWU's internal inquiry has not been published.

- (16) Subsequently, it was found to be illegal to eject these workers first (ie. prior to old age pensioners and volunteers); but in the event, the clause stipulating their removal remained, and any that were left, went out with January.

- (17) Ref BW 8/S1: 253-264

- (18) See Appendix 1 . It was revised August 1973, with the addition of a clause stating the agreement not intended to be legally enforceable.

- (19) See Appendix 2

- (20) The return to work agreement is reproduced in Appendix 2

- (21) Ref SB 28/S3: 352

- (22) Ref SB 28/S3: 352-367

- (23) Ref NB 24/S3: 321-347

- (24) Ref MB 40/S4: 680-

- (25) Ref JM 29/S2: 887-948

- (26) Ref JW 13/S2: 685-697

- (27) Ref KA 32/S2: 596-647

- (28) Union official in negotiations with the company 28.6.1977. Ref 385.

- (29) Ref MC 24-5/S3: 288-322

- (30) Ref BB 24/S2: 526-540

- (31) Ref EW 19/S : 1025-

- (32) Ref JA 48/S5: 486

CHAPTER 11. THE WOMEN WORKERS AND THEIR UNION

"The majority of the women don't get on with the union. They say they're not strong enough and they won't do anything for them". Barbara (Final Assembly)(1)

If the main benefits of unionisation derive from the development of collective bargaining - the establishing of appropriate structures for representation and negotiation, through which workers' interests might be effectively promoted - then it is clear that this was problematic from the women's point of view.

"Most of the time, I quite honestly think that a lot of them wouldn't be in the union if they didn't have to. They say they can't see what they pay their money for" Madge (moulding Shop) (2)

"We get this all the time ... the union's no good and they're ripping up their cards - I mean, this is happening all the time."  
Edna (Final Assembly) (3)

"Oh, you'll find ... the majority of the people in BSR are disillusioned with the union ... They don't think the union's doing enough for them".  
Jill (Supervisor - Final Assembly) (4)

Why was dissatisfaction with the trade union so widespread among the women workers on the shop floor? There was, clearly, a feeling that the organisation was ineffective on their behalf: it was "not strong enough" and it was "not doing enough" for them. What was the reason for this?

"When they've got a problem its: 'the Union - they don't care what's going on'. But they haven't brought it, really, to the Union yet.

And say they're not getting their performances, or this Inbucon (productivity scheme) isn't working: 'Huh! Trust the Union to get something that we can't get our money on'. 'Huh! they never get anything for us, like'. 'Look at it now! How are we going to get our money?' But they haven't brought it up in the right manner, or said - what are we doing about it?

All we get is a load of abuse. And if you do tell them what they're getting, and you want some of their backing - they don't back you".  
Edna (Final Assembly) (5)

What were the problems underlying these members' complaints?  
And how is this lack of effectiveness to be explained?

"NOT STRONG ENOUGH"

Perhaps it is because it is the women's experience of the problems which constantly provides the main focus of our discussion in this Chapter, that we find questions about their strength in relation to management in the workplace being continuously posed in terms of the kind of institutional support and resources available: not only financial but also, importantly, organisational (vis coordination, information and guidance).

Thus in the first Section, when we consider the 'strength' of the female membership, we find there are two main issues in the balance. On the one hand, there is the question of what institutional resources were available in relation to these members' needs, since this will, obviously, have had an impact on their strength and effectiveness vis a vis management. On the other hand, the availability and extent of these institutional resources may themselves be partly dependent upon the membership's 'bargaining strength' this time in relation to their own organisation.

We are, therefore, required to take a step back from a view of their relationships with management and to look at the effectivity of the women members in relation to their own institution first. We look at two levels of the union's domestic organisation - at the factory and at the branch. What were the problems of the women members in respect of both of these?

A brief view (because this is considered in more detail in the following Chapter) shows the shop stewards' organisation in the factory to be dominated by management to a significant degree. A longer view of the branch reveals both the dominance of the male

membership and a strong role played by the union's full-time officers. How responsive, therefore, was the union's organisation at this level to women's problems and interests? Our analysis of the records show that in the first place, these received little attention, to the extent that the male workers' problems dominated the agenda. And in the second place, when issues of major concern to the female membership were raised - this was to little effect.

While it may be a truism to say that 'the strongest groups of workers will gain more' - from either management or their own institutions, we are suggesting here that the underlying processes whereby some groups gain more than others are not only complex but they are inter-linked. Thus, in setting out, as we are in this chapter, the parameters of the women workers' position in the union and in specifying the problems they faced, we have constantly to enquire: what are the sources of this membership's apparent 'weakness'? What underlies their seeming inability and unwillingness to both press their demands and claims and to use the institutional resources available?

#### "NOT DOING ENOUGH"

In the second section we go on to view the outcome, from the women's point of view, of collective bargaining. We look at two agreements finalised between the union's negotiators and management and here again, we can identify problems which appear to spring from the women members' lack of bargaining strength on the one hand and the institution's lack of responsiveness to their interests on the other. In the first example we can see that the agreement reflected the needs of management to a greater extent than the needs of the

women workers. In the second case, the agreement reflected the demands of the male workers more strongly than those of the women.

We identify a number of specific limitations in respect of both the representative system and the collective bargaining structures - established as a result of unionisation - which affected the female membership especially. In particular, we find a number of questions being raised concerning the degree of responsiveness of the institution as a whole, to the women members' needs and demands. As a result, we are led to examine the patterns of interest representation within the organisation in more detail. Not surprisingly, perhaps, we find that this is heavily weighted in favour of the male workers. But this does not get us very far. For although we can surmise that this may, to some extent, explain the problem of responsiveness in organisational terms, further questions are also raised. How is this pattern of unequal representation itself to be explained?

In our concluding discussion we outline an approach to these questions which does provide a means of explaining some of the problems which have been raised. And these points are taken up in the following Chapters.

We begin, however, by taking a cue from the women members who felt that the organisation was ...

"Not strong enough"

(Do you think trade unions do enough for women?)

"They, obviously, fight their battles. But when you say trade unions - the trade union is, surely, only as powerful as its membership... Because, as the union reminds the membership - you are the trade union, not us. Therefore, if the majority (of women) are apathetic about it (equality) or even don't want it changed - you see, THEY are not pressing - because unions will do something when they are being pressed by the membership". Gordon (Storeman) (6)

Conventional wisdom has it that 'the members are the union'. Ultimately, the strength and effectiveness of the workers' organization is dependent upon their ability and willingness to press their claims against management and to take action on their own behalf. Is, therefore, the women's appreciation of the union's lack of effectiveness, simply a reflection of the weakness, 'docility' or lack of experience of this group of workers in trade union terms?

As Bob, a serviceman who represented 170 women in the Moulding Shop observed:

"I've found management pretty dogmatic - to the extent that when they say something they don't want to hear anyone else's point of view".

(Do you think they would be the same if they were dealing with men?)

"Oh no. The men - if they take the men too far here, the men'll down it - see, same as they have done several times before". Bob (Serviceman Moulding Shop) (7)

There are, of course, numerous points of contrast in the respective positions of the men and women workers which underlie this observation; such as the latter's (relative) lack of self-confidence in general, and lesser employment security. These aspects can be taken to underlie the position of women workers generally even though they were not specifically mentioned by Edna, when she tried to pin down the problem of her members' lack of preparedness to act:

(Have you ever asked them for backing?)

"Just that once, with that girl... but it wasn't for long, it was only for about 15 minutes, and they moved her. But I've never actually asked for their backing - putting down tools on a fight that I'm having on the lines - because, you see, the first question they ask: 'Who's paying the money? Who's going to pay our money on Friday?' And you're stuck - well, you can't turn round and say who is going to pay their money on



Friday. And you go to your convenor, you say - well, I want so and so to stop - 'Oh, you daren't do that!' you know, 'they must stop on their own accord' - and people won't! People won't stop on their own accord, you see, they look to you to tell them everything. But - they also want their money on Friday. Well, you go to them and you say - 'they're not going to be prepared to do so and so, it's up to you which way it's going to be.' Oh - they'll have a load of moans - 'the bloody union's hopeless here, it never brings you out on strike, it never tells you what to do' They'll tell you this, 'They're not bothered - who's going to pay our money?' - and things like this, you know. They won't put down tools on their own bat.

If they moan about doubling - up. You say - go through the procedures and I'll take it up in the office - and that. And they say, 'oh it's not worth it. I'll only end up doing it in the end'."

(So they can't complain about doubling-up?)

"Well, they could complain. But they say, they have to go through so many people, they just don't bother in the end. They say - 'Oh, I might as well do it' - you know.

And then you go in the office and they (management) blame it on the absenteeism. So ... it is a problem really".

Edna (Final Assembly) (8)

It would appear that the women's preparedness to take action here is predicated on a number of points directly pertaining to the organisation, and so we need to examine these.

From this account, we can see that first, if members' action is to take procedural forms, problems have to be expressed initially as grievances and then the grievances have to be processed through the system of representation. And for some reason, this was not considered worthwhile. At a different level, the decision to take action directly, i.e. by stopping work, also required consideration of what might be gained - this time by loss of wages and disruption. And in the balance here, was the question of what kind of wider support strikers might expect. Both of these aspects apply, of course, to men and women members. So if we are looking for their

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special relevance in relation to the female membership's (in) effectiveness, we need to identify particular features of the women's situation which might render these aspects more pertinent. Was there any greater need for, and reliance upon, the grievance procedure and collective or financial support, on the part of the women compared to the men? Or, were either of these features of trade union organisation 'less responsive' in respect of the female membership? These questions are taken up in more detail below. In relation to a third aspect mentioned by Edna, there were some clear differences in terms of the men and women's 'needs' and, therefore, reliance upon organisational resources. For in order to make decisions and to proceed to take any action at all - in whatever form - the members needed to weigh-up their situation, individually and/or collectively. And we have already noted first, that the women workers' opportunities for meeting and discussion were much more limited than the men's; and, secondly, their needs, in this respect were that much greater:

"I find the men stick together more. But the men are a small minority - we're a large majority. It's easier for them to stick together".  
Edna (Final Assembly) (9)

Overall, there appeared to be strong limitations in respect of every point made by Edna which did not either wholly, or necessarily derive from the women directly, but which, nevertheless, had an impact on both their confidence and effectiveness.

"Because, let's face it, if the management offer some thing - if we hadn't got a union in... we'd have had to have taken it. But where... if they offer it now, we can disagree with them - with the union's backing... Well, when I say union's backing - advice. Because you never get their backing. There's never

been an official strike here! ` Never! I only mentioned that yesterday. And there has, I'm sure there's been times that call for an official strike. But... I don't know whether it's a good thing or a bad thing. I don't believe in strikes, to be honest - but it would be nice, once - if you've got a big issue - that you would definitely get the backin' of the union," (Give confidence?) "Yes. Yes it would".  
Jill (Final Assembly Supervisor) (10)

"There have been times when I think this union should have brought the people out on strike and it should have gone towards helping their week's money so that they could fight a big problem. But somehow it never seems to be there for them..."  
Edna (Final Assembly) (11)

There had, of course, been numerous stoppages, but where the mass of women workers especially were concerned, there had never been any suggestion these might find official support (12).  
Indeed, the full time officers always refused to "negotiate under pressure", i.e. until normal working had been resumed, which made it difficult for shop stewards to support stoppages by their own members (13).

Some of the women workers' strikes had ended with achievements. Many had been marked by a high degree of militancy. But this, as Madge pointed out, was not to be confused with 'strength'. The effectiveness of the women's actions was very often dissipated in characteristic confusion and disarray. Again, we can note a number of points, this time in Madge's account, which place the sources of this weakness in terms of the organisation rather than the women directly.

"The union have done a very good job in a lot of aspects, but there again sometimes I think it doesn't always work for the best. Oh, I don't know it's with the disputes - when we get disputes, the union doesn't seem to be strong, it doesn't seem to help. We get a lot of incensed members and you get a false impression actually - you

need a strong union, or a very well informed union."

(How could that be remedied? What would you like to see?)

"Well, one that can explain to it's members, even when you get them as het up as we've had them here - a way you could explain to them, why a thing is working that way - and give them the full facts and NOT keep things to yourselves. As stewards and that - to give them the full facts, the 'fors' and 'against', and then they can make up their own mind.

This doesn't happen, we always get splits if we have anything serious. We've got members that, you know, are going to stand and walk out, and then you've got the others that want to stop in - and it does cause an awful lot of trouble. You need to be strong at a time like that and you need to be able to explain to your members just what its all about - and we don't seem to get that". Madge (Moulding Shop) (14)

Disorganisation resulting from the lack of information and guidance on the union side was one of the membership's strongest complaints. But if no stoppage would find official support, no steward dared to suggest this course and was, indeed, forbidden to do so. (15) Moreover, in the tightly integrated system of production, it was difficult for stewards or groups individually to control the extent or scope of their action. So a high degree of organisation would, actually, have been required, for the women workers to use sectional stoppages successfully.

"If we do get disputes, they like to know where they stand, not hivering and hovering. When they stopped us - when the women on the lines were incensed - and stopped the Moulding Shop working, the management came down and turned the machines off. Women were actually working the machines and they turned them off. And they still didn't pay them. It was done again - the last dispute we had. They came down and turned the machines off, the management did, and people were still working with them.

So... on two occasions, they sat there for two hours, thinking that if they didn't go home then they'd get paid. Now I couldn't tell them to go home - I went home myself as much as to say - well

I'm not going to sit here and not get paid, but they still kept sitting there and they didn't get paid. And so they hadn't really got a strong lead from the union, and this is where they tend to get their grievances you see".

Madge (Moulding Shop) (16). My emphasis.

Disorganisation and confusion were seen to result in the loss of an effectiveness on the workers' part, which might otherwise have sprung from collective organisation.

It is clear that these sources of weakness were institutional rather than personal, and they were perceived specifically in the union's lack of 'backing', which encapsulated the notion of wider support - not necessarily or chiefly in the form of finance, but of information and guidance.

"When they come out on strike and then they say, 'are union backing it?' - No. 'Oh well, the union's useless', you know, 'they're not backing us'." (Do you agree with that?) "Yes. I don't say every one, because they'd say - oh well - go out on strike for everything. But, like that Wednesday, when we weren't going to get paid - well, the union said we SHOULD have got paid. I thought well, to me, they could say - well O.K., if we ain't going to get paid then we WILL come out on strike - AND MAKE A DECISION". Kathy (Paint Shop) (17) emphasis original.

"Oh, you'll find - not only supervision, but the majority of the people in BSR - are disillusioned with the union... even staff. They don't think the union's doing enough. (What sort of things do they want the union to do?) They want the union to back them - they say that they're there to advise the members - and there's not enough of that... advice coming over from the union - which I have got to agree.

Because when we've had trouble when we've had wage negotiations - I'd love to go back to my members and advise them. But we'm told...all we're to say... 'Give 'em the answer from management, and let 'em decide themselves'. Now, to me, I'm a shop steward and I should be able to ADVISE my members - but we are, actually forbidden to do that. Oh, yes, definitely". (Who forbids you?) "Oh, the union - you know you've got your convenors, and people like that... 'You can't go and tell your member to do this

I'm not going to sit here and not get paid, but they still kept sitting there and they didn't get paid. And so they hadn't really got a strong lead from the union, and this is where they tend to get their grievances you see".  
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and do that'. And I said, - I could give 'er the situation, and then if she asks for my advice, I'd give 'er my own personal opinion... and then it would be up to them. I said - I'll always agree that they... you know, you can tell your member what's goin' on and ask for their opinion - but, 9 times out of 10, they'll turn round to me and say, 'Well, what do you think?' And I'm told to say, 'It isn't what I think, its what you think'. - But its wrong, it is wrong".  
Jill (Final Assembly (Supervisor)(18) emphasis in original.

Jill saw this as an abdication of responsibility on the part of the union, which the membership also recognised and 'paid for' by their reduced effectiveness and lack of strength in the workplace. But how far was it also a result of this? The lack of information helpful to the membership was, in many respects, constructed. And Jill saw that this was linked to another dominant aspect of union organisation at BSR - the lack of democratic control.

She recalled an instance when, during the annual wage negotiations, the negotiating committee reported management's reply back to the shop steward body as a whole. The rest of the shop stewards took notes, but ...

"...then after that, there'd be a discussion on what we were going to tell our members - and what we wasn't goin' to tell our members... Which to me is all wrong". (What weren't you going to tell them?) "Well, little tit-bits you know, which, to me were... they were relevant to their decision. If they'd gotta make a decision, it would've helped them to make it. There's a lot of things like that".

"They wouldn't come back to the shop floor and ask their opinion - of what they WANT to do. You've got a dozen people thinking for 4,000 - which is wrong".

"And that's how the last convenor got out. Because she used to make those decisions for the people on the shop floor, and it was wrong. And that's why she was voted out - and she was a good convenor actually... But you know... I mean, probably in her love for union, and it was love, 'cos she lived and breathed union - she thought she was helping the members by trying to get 'em more - she would accept things what... the women on the shopfloor would not 've accepted, or reject it... whichever the case may be. Jill (Final Assembly Supervisor) (19)

My emphasis lower case underlined  
Original emphasis upper case underlined



This leads us, therefore, to consider another side to the question of the women workers' 'strength' namely, that in relation to their own organisation, as Gordon has pointed out, "Unions will do something when pressed by the membership". But how much pressure is required? While it may well be the case that because of their position in the labour process the women workers placed greater reliance upon and had greater needs in relation to, institutional resources. We need some view also, of the degree to which the union's representational and bargaining structures were responsive to their women members' problems and interests; if the question of "strength" is to be properly gauged.

It is immediately obvious that there were problems for the women members, in respect of both levels of the domestic or local union organisation-at the factory and in the branch.

#### FACTORY ORGANISATION

"Management are strict with the union. They want to know why we want meetings and there has to be a reason for having them..."  
Madge (Moulding Shop) (20)

"We don't know if we've got a meeting till it comes. Because to get a meeting, it's like having to go through a gaol-gate here".  
Nora (Final Assembly) (21)

The extent to which management attempted to dominate the union organisation at factory level, was certainly seen as a problem for the women shop stewards in terms of their effectiveness in dealing with their members' problems. (Grievance handling is examined in detail in the next Chapter.) They frequently felt they were being made to do management's job:

"I don't think we ought to be involved in telling people what they've got to do - I think that should be management's side, I think we're there to help them, not push them into doing things".  
Janet (Sub-assembly) (22)

And collectively, the body of stewards were constrained in terms of their meetings and also the scope of their negotiations at factory level.

"We have a shop stewards' meeting on the second Wednesday each month, and we meet Smith on the third Wednesday - but only if everything is running smoothly. If there is any industrial action whatsoever, within the group, then those meetings don't usually take place".

Pearl (Convenor - sub-assembly)(23)

Moreover, there appeared to be a rule that questions concerning pay were disallowed from discussion or negotiation. This seems to have arisen because alterations to the payment system could not be made at factory level. Topics were confined to 'welfare' type questions.

"You can go to those meetings and discuss the welfare, such as heating, extraction of air - special welfare, but you cannot discuss money".  
(How do you raise questions about performances and counts then?)

"Through the Superintendent in domestic procedure, or else at branch - in the wage negotiation".

Pearl (Sub-assembly Convenor)(24)

There certainly seemed to be problems with this 'rule'. And, it would appear, with changing it.

"So what we call performances - can't be discussed. Or if it is, it can't be brought up - taken any further. I think this is wrong. The union must have agreed it - its something Mary's (branch secretary) done. They tell you to bring it up domestically, but you haven't got a chance at all... Its something I'd like to see changed - it would have to be done through the branch - but its difficult if Mary's agreed".

Pip (Sub-assembly)(25)

#### THE BRANCH

"If its a big thing you take it to branch".

The female membership outnumbered the males by about 5:1 in the branch, which in 1977 was around 8,500 strong. It is difficult to assess what proportions of men and women attended the branch

meeting which, on occasion, could see a turn-out of hundreds - but it was usually around fifty or sixty. The shop stewards provided the main core of those attending, and they numbered in total, over 80 roughly divided into a third male and two-thirds female. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that women would have outnumbered the men attending branch meetings.

The main part of the bi-monthly meeting (running from 8 p.m. - 9.15 p.m.) was taken up with items brought up under 'matters arising from the previous minutes' with the full-time officials usually responding or commenting on the on-going issues; followed by reports given by each of the officers. Members who wished to raise points for discussion from the floor could do so by notifying the branch office in writing at least three days beforehand.

What issues were raised at the branch? And who did they concern? The insert (pp466-468) has been constructed by extracting every recorded instance of issues being raised, at any point, in 21 meetings, which affected specific groups rather than the whole workforce; and noting the sex composition of the group. The fact that only a third of such issues (32 out of 83) raised between October 1972 and February 1977 related specifically to women, reveals the men's dominance of the branch (26). Even so, it does rather understate this. First, because it does not take account of who was making the reference, or the reasons for it. Thus 6 of the 32 instances relating to women arose as a result of the officials announcing changes in legislation which specifically affected them. Secondly, the analysis does not record the men's dominance in respect of all 'general' issues, such as branch wages policy in relation to the various stages of incomes policy.

In contrast to the issues raised by the men, few of those relating to the women were direct expressions of particular problems they were experiencing at the workplace. Within this 'group' of issues, however, it should be noted that those most commonly raised concerned movement of labour (which accounted for 9 of the 23 relevant instances).

Examining the issues specifically concerning male workers in this period, it can be seen that only seven of the 51 instances referred to 'men in general'. Most questions were concerned with work/pay problems of specific groups, and that most frequently re-curring, was the autoshop. With a total of nine instances recorded, this section accounted for 20% of the issues raised concerning particular groups of male workers.

The minutes of the branch committee display this pattern even more strongly. Again, two-thirds of the specific issues (20 out of 30) raised between January 1974 and May 1977 concerned groups of male workers alone. But of the 10 specific instances counted here as relating to women, 4 refer to the absenteeism agreement (and on one occasion at least, this issue was raised because the agreement, in fact, covered men as well). If this topic is not included in the analysis, then over three-quarters of the issues recorded as being raised on the branch committee (12 meetings) which concerned specific groups of workers, concerned men. Only six instances were recorded concerning women, and two of these were announcements arising as a result of government legislation.

The picture presented by this analysis of the minutes is impressionistic. Nor, of course, can the latter be taken necessarily to reflect the whole balance or content of discussions. Yet despite

Questions on issues affecting specific groups raised at the branch meeting  
(from branch minutes 1972-1977)

<u>Meeting &amp; Subject</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Sex composition</u>
17.10.72.		
staggered holidays	toolroom	males
pass-outs	nightshift (OH)	males
nomination forms	nightshift (SB)	males
guide to shopfloor procedure	autoshop (OH)	males (some females)
6.3.73.		
bonus for machine shop	autoshop (OH)	males (some females)
job evaluation	moulding shop	females
31.5.73.		
extra duties	Inspectors & Chargehands (SB)	males
conditions	moulding shop (SB)	females
12.7.73.		
holiday pay	females	females
conditions	auto setters	males
pay to attend branch	pm shift reps.	males (some females)
27.10.73		
guaranteed week agreement	part-time workers	females
pay (lieu-bonus?)	indirects: setters & lorry-drivers, etc.	males
pay	charge-hands, setters and inspectors	males
over-time distribution	night shift	males
condition of machinery	press shop	mostly females
job satisfaction	plating & press shop	males & females
productivity deal	night shift	males
5.12.73.		
pay	press shop males (OH)	males
lieu bonus	indirects	males
12.2.1974		
lieu bonus	indirects	males
4.4.74.		
lieu bonus	indirects	males
over-crowding	autoshop	males (some females)
piecework system	piece-workers	mostly women
holiday pay - av. earnings	overtime & shift workers	males
15.3.74.		
working conditions	autoshop (OH)	males (some females)
lieu bonus	indirects	males
holiday pay - av. earnings	overtime & shift workers	males
job grading	moulding shop	females
union membership	old age pensioners	males & females
holiday pay	night shift	males

<u>Meeting &amp; Subject</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Sex composition</u>
31.11.74. shop stewards' course male wage claim	female reps males	females males
12.12.74. male wage claim redundancy piecework system movement of labour	males pensioners autoshop (OH) production workers	males females males (some females) females
6.3.75. piecework system male wage claim continued short-time working redundancy " movement of labour pension rights equal pay men doing womens' jobs movement of labour and representation	autoshop (OH) males females night shift twilight shift production workers widows & single parents females autoshop	males (some females) males females males females females females males & females females
24.4.74. separate negotiations holiday pay - av. earnings	skilled men overtime & shift workers	males males
17.7.75. hours of work pay (allowances) hours equal pay negotiations - complaint pay movement of labour overtime differentials	part-time workers lorry drivers transport section representation of males senior chargehands sub-assembly (WL) males top-grade setters & chargehands	females males males males males females males males
9.9.75. hours of work & redundancy (re)employment hours of work	part-time workers press-shop setter (WL) night shift	females male males
20.11.75. ambulance room Equal Pay & Sex Discrimina- tion Act	auto shop (OH) females	males (some females) females
29.1.76. holiday pay - av. earnings	overtime & shift workers	males
4.3.76. union contributions & EPA/SDA conditions branch meetings movement of labour	females moulding shop (SB) shift workers production workers	females females males females

<u>Meeting &amp; Subject</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Sex composition</u>
29.4.76.		
union contributions & EPA/SDA	females	females
lieu bonus (£1.50)	shift workers	males
lieu bonus (£2.00)	females	females
sectional meetings	males	males
mobility of labour	production workers	females
up-grading	progress chasers	males
1.7.76.		
lieu-bonus (£1.50)	males	males
piece-work system	pieceworkers	males & females
holiday pay - av. earnings	overtime & shift workers	males
differentials	females	females
conditions	Roband (W.L.)	males
union rule-book request	Roband (W.L.)	males
16.9.76.		
absenteeism	female workers	females
convenorship	(female replaced by male) W.L.	males & females
holiday pay - av. earnings	overtime & shift workers	males
movement of labour	production workers	females
24.2.1977.		
pay (visit to Dept. of Employment)	autosshop setters	males
movement of labour	production workers	females
twilight shift (+ movement of labour)	evening shift (W.L.)	females
overtime	night shift (W.L.)	males

Questions on issues affecting specific groups raised at branch committee  
(from branch committee minutes 1974-1977)

<u>Meeting &amp; Subject</u>	<u>Group</u>	<u>Sex composition</u>
24.1.74. Guaranteed week & short time working	in relation to:- toolroom maintenance semi-skilled males & female supervisors	males males males females
22.2.74. Lieu bonus Maintenance agreement Clause 26 Overtime Sectional branch meeting Wage negotiating team Transport drivers	indirects maintenance workers maintenance workers night shift males to include more males	males males males males males males males
15.10.74. Holiday pay - av. earnings Guaranteed week - av. earnings Male wage claim	overtime & shift workers " " " "	males males males
26.3.75. Equal opportunities legislation	female workers	females
12.3.76. Union contributions EPA/SDA	female workers	females
(9.7.76. (Absenteeism agreement	female workers	females )
(13.8.76. (Absenteeism agreement	female workers	females )
(17.7.76. (Absenteeism agreement	female workers	females )
(27.10.76. (Absenteeism agreement (	female workers objections male overtime & shift workers production workers maintenance	males & females ) males mostly female males )
11.1.77. Holiday pay - av. earnings Convenorship	overtime & shift workers Portersfield toolroom	males males
2.5.77. Convenorship	Portersfield toolroom	males



Meeting & Subject

Group

Sex composition

26.5.77.

Convenorship

Wage claim

Disciplinary charges

Movement of labour

Portersfield toolroom

female workers

toolroom rep. vs.

autosshop reps.

2 females sacked for

refusal

males

females

males

females

these limitations, there do appear to be some strong indications here that the problems of the women members at BSR had a low profile in the branch! Was this because these problems were not raised? Or because they were raised, but not recorded? Probably both was the case - so how can this be explained?

The usual explanations offered, for the first circumstance at least, concern women's general lack of confidence and deference particularly in forums such as a large meeting.

"Like when we got the 10%, well that's not enough - we need more. But, you know, they - well they won't air their views really. They say things, but they won't go up to these meetings, and won't... They just sit there and listen if they do go - they don't get up and say how they think".  
Barbara (Final Assembly)(27)

It is beginning to be realised that this unwillingness to speak (or attend) may be strongly associated with other significant features of the environment, such as the person's perception of how their contribution is likely to be received and some measure of whether it is 'worthwhile'. (28) Moreover, assessment of the latter may also colour, whether and to what extent, contributions are recorded as well. We need to examine more closely, therefore, what happened to issues which had been brought to the branch - especially by the women members.

"If its a big thing, you take it to branch - like if its going to affect all the factories - but then, you don't hear any more about it really. You know, everything seems to keep going quiet, every time you're fighting - you get tired sometimes, because things go quiet and you just don't seem to get anywhere - even though you're fighting very hard".  
Edna (Final Assembly)(29)

"Well, my own honest opinion, on a lot of stuff that's been brought up at branch and has gone through branch, its never been proceeded on as far as I can see. There's a lot of things which are brought up at branch that you know for a fact they'll never get through anywhere..."  
(What sort of things can you think of?)  
"Oh there's somebody brings up a motion on

something - I can't say specific things because it's been some time since I've been branch Chairman now. But, you know, you can sort of... Me being branch Chairman, knowing how much has got through previously you know, I'm aware - it's alright them putting that, but that's a waste of time - sort of thing".

Terry (Maintenance Chargehand ex-branch Chairman)(30)

With a full-time branch administrative officer and a negotiating (regional) officer who gave the company a major part of his attention, the branch was fully serviced. In fact, apart from the monthly shop stewards' meetings at the factory, no meetings were held without at least one, but usually both of the officers being present. (31) This included the branch, branch committee and joint shop stewards. Both officials made significant contributions to all of these bodies, and were, of course, in a position to exercise a high degree of control. (32) This kind of accessibility does not, however, appear to have resulted in rendering the branch, (or any of the other bodies) any more responsive to the problems and interests of the female membership.

(Are there any problems which your members have, which don't seem to get brought up or fully discussed at branch?)

"Some times they do, and sometimes we haven't got time to bring them up, you know. And sometimes they're just shelved".

(What kinds of things are 'shelved'?) "Various things - usually things that have gone through what we term procedure, you know - absenteeism, I think's one.

And an occasion, just a few months ago, whereby... Once again, I say - we're equal - we're termed as semi-skilled people, right? Well, the semi-skilled male has £10 holiday pay more than the semi-skilled female. So, that has been brought up at branch, but, I think it was at some embarrassment of Paul Silver and Mary, and... Yes, there's lots of things, if I could just think - that we all get very upset over, but nothing seems to come out of it, you know.

Oh, yes - working conditions. That's the main thing you know - working conditions for women on the main lines. In respect of the way they have to work - the pace.

And, the various agreements that we've got, that are no good to us really. Movement of

labour... Well, we've got a rule book here, and its just... a lot of it... ...There's a hell of a lot in there, you know, and we've been trying to get this altered, for about 2 years. And there's two of us, me and a friend - we've put suggestions, you know, of the things that we would like altered - but, we've never heard anything from it! Gave it to Mary - haven't heard a thing about it (concerning the work study, you know). ...But, you might think I'm being unfair to Mary and Paul, but you know, I think that - our management, they just chose to ignore... things. And, that's it".  
Sally (Sub-assembly)(33) my emphasis 1/c underlined.

More seriously than "things going quiet" and problems getting shelved, there was the question of what happened to decisions on which the members had clearly voted that action was to be taken.

"Well, I'm disillusioned with the branch really - because every time they make a Branch mandate - it gets broken".  
Jill (Final Assembly Supervisor)(34)

(What do you think about the branch meeting?)  
"Not a lot. I've known of.. where you stand up and you air your views and it gets passed - sort of thing. And it just gets thrown out - it doesn't go anywhere - that's the end of it then".  
Barbara (Final Assembly)(35)

"Many things are passed but which never seem to get through - the vote against the Inbucon (productivity deal) it was a unanimous vote that was and it still didn't get done. And if you can't go to branch and get things done, what chance have you got really, on the shopfloor?

I could be wrong, in that I don't know, fully now, how trade unionism works. And there could be some legitimate reasons why this doesn't happen. But I'm like the members. I have no explanation why they don't happen. And a shop steward can only inform their members what's gone on if they've already been informed."  
Madge (Moulding Shop)(36)

The greatest amount of inertia or lack of any apparent response or effect through the branch seemed to fall in precisely those areas we have identified as most problematic from the women workers' point of view:

(Branch meetings - any problems your members have which are not raised?)  
"Well - 'domestic' problems can't be (i.e. pertaining to an individual factory).  
(Anything you think should be raised?)  
Absenteeism - we want these rules abolished. And movement of labour - but its in the rule-book.  
(Have these problems been discussed at branch?)  
We've raised it with Mary, but all they say is - 'Well, its in the rule-book'.  
Janet (Sub-assembly)(37)

What happened to these problems?

"The officials always say... things should have been brought up domestically. Well we've brought things up domestically and its gone as far as that - and its not been solved and, therefore, it goes through to Stage 5, and it still can't be done - so its a thing that has to be passed at branch."

(What sort of issue?)  
"Well such as movement of labour - which has got to be done at branch anyway. Well we've already taken it to branch and still nothing is done at branch - so where do we go on from there? Its the same with absenteeism".  
Pip (Sub-assembly)(38)

It would appear that problems which could not be 'shelved' but would continuously recur, were kept at bay by being pushed back down into the lower levels of procedure, i.e. to be dealt with 'domestically' at the level of each individual factory. We can see this process happening quite clearly in relation to movement of labour, which is recorded as being raised on seven occasions in branch minutes covering five and a half years. No progress was made in these negotiations at all during this period. (39)

The women stewards were aware of the wider consequences of this 'ineffectiveness' on one side and 'lack of responsiveness' on the other, in terms of their own members' involvement and commitment to fighting the issues. "If you can't go to branch and get it done - what chance have you got, really, on the shopfloor?"

Discussions concerning movement of labour (M.O.L.) recorded in Branch minutes during period Oct. 1972 - May 1977. (All questions raised under Any Other Business).

- 12.12.1974. Question about loss of earnings (lower performance) due to M.O.L.  
Action: Referred back to factory convenor (OH).
6. 3.1974. A lengthy discussion reported. Main complaints: that it was not done fairly, representation not allowed to women in machine shop (OH) during M.O.L. and piece-work performances badly affected.  
Action: A meeting with the convenors and the Company to be arranged, to draw up an agreement on payments, eg: flexibility, breakdown and rectification etc. to cover the three factories.
17. 7.1975. Problem of M.O.L. and loss of earnings at Waterfall Lane due to section of sub-assembly being phased out.  
Action: Referred back to factory procedure.
4. 3.1976. Problem with M.O.L. and work contracted out.  
Action: "Ought to be" taken up at S.5 meeting with Company. Branch "wants more consultation" with Company on both issues.
29. 4.1976. Question on M.O.L. "This problem still being dealt with at convenor level".
- 30.11.1976. Lengthy discussion reported. Full-time workers getting a rough deal. Part-time workers not taking their full share of M.O.L.  
Action: "As the question of M.O.L. was being discussed with Mr. Stuart and the convenors, it was agreed to leave it with the convenors to get the best possible deal for all members. It was vital that M.O.L. be allowed to continue, otherwise we could be in a position like some industries - where no work was available in some areas lay-offs occur. It must be done, however, on a fair basis".  
Convenors to negotiate with Company for average earnings or average for the job, whichever is the greater when M.O.L. takes place.
24. 2.1977. M.O.L.: "Once again this problem was raised and a heated discussion took place. This matter was at Convenor level."

"People would come to branch if they knew that things were really going to be flushed out and ironed out - and acted upon". Madge (Moulding Shop)(40)

"Management knows - if it really came to a pull - with the shopstewards or management - the girls would stick by management anyway. I think they know this, you know. Because they're afraid of their jobs and they're afraid of losing their money".

"And I think one of the reasons why things aren't fought through - I think they should be brought up (at branch), and when they are brought up, KEPT. Not just for one day or two days - ALL THE TIME." Edna (Final Assembly)(41) emphasis in original.

There was clearly something of a vicious circle here because in order to keep the pressure on -

"The members'll only go to the meeting if they think there's something going for them - like a wage claim. But (even if they don't go) - the next day they always want to know - they're interested but just won't put themselves out to come".

(Would it make a difference if they did?)

"Yes. It would give Paul Silver and them the idea as they were after something - and interested in what he was a-doing. I think it would make him look differently - towards us, and help us more than - help the women more than what he is doing".

Lorna (Final Assembly)(42)

"Not doing enough"

(Do you think trade unions generally do enough for women?)

"No. I think they've got the male more in mind when they make rules and things like that. I don't know. They seem to have the man in mind all the while. And then this 'no time off' - and things like that, you know. I suppose there's lots of ways they could help the women but they don't..."

Barbara (Final Assembly)(43)

With the introduction of the trade union a bargaining structure was established whereby workers' demands and claims upon the Company could be negotiated. A number of agreements had been signed over the years, either formalising terms and conditions of employment, like the 'Guaranteed Week' and 'Procedure for Redundancy', or assigning benefits, such as the annual pay awards and the Pension Scheme.

How did the women workers fare in this collective bargaining activity, as it was manifested in such agreements? Their main complaints were that on the one hand 'the union did not do enough for them', and on the other, that 'the union did more for the men'. Were these perceptions confirmed in terms of the agreements which were negotiated? We look at two which appear to illustrate some aspects of the problem: the absenteeism agreement and the productivity deal.

#### THE AGREEMENT ON ABSENTEEISM

In June 1976 an agreement was made between BSR and the Union, to adhere to a new disciplinary procedure for dealing with uncertified absenteeism (44). Prior to this, there had been an informal understanding that employees who were absent on more than three days in 3 weeks or 4 weeks were liable to be disciplined. This was not necessarily systematically applied; in some areas, and on some occasions, management adopted a more, or less, tight approach - as it suited them.

The new procedure rendered employees more liable to incur disciplinary action for "unjustifiable" absence - the threshold being reduced to two days in a three week period. It also enabled management to apply disciplinary action 'progressively': i.e. a single day's absence in the two following four week periods incurring increasingly harsh penalties.



Given the problems and interests of the overwhelming majority of the female membership in this area as outlined in PartTwo above - how can this agreement be explained? Especially since opposition could be so vehement.

"It was about this business of having two days off, and someone had had to go into the office. And this woman thought they shouldn't have gone in - so of course, she just exploded. She just got a bee in her bonnet about them going in for two days - and she just exploded - just exploded!"

Jenny, a new shop steward, had been asked by management to accompany the absentee and to witness the warning. (45) When she did this, another woman on the line had responded angrily:

"I mean she really went berserk! The whole of the warehouse could hear what she was saying. (What was she saying?) She was bawling and shouting - 'they shouldn't go in', and - 'you're losing us down if you take them in - you shouldn't do it!' And, you know, everybody - they turned round and in the end I felt that it was me that was wrong you know. I don't think there was any need to fetch in all the entire factory. And, of course, she didn't let it rest after. She started again, going home on the bus. And she got the whole bus up in arms going home".  
Jenny (Final Assembly) (46)

Why then, had this agreement been negotiated? And why did the union officials insist that it should be adhered to? The minutes of the September 1976 branch meeting records that:

"Mr. Silver reported on a meeting with the Company with a view of setting up a sick pay scheme. He wished it to be minuted that owing to the serious absenteeism amongst our female membership, we were not giving the Company any encouragement in implementing a Sick Pay Scheme for BSR workers. It was possible that if we could encourage less absenteeism, the Company may be prepared to introduce a Sick Pay Scheme".

The absenteeism agreement was a quid pro quo - conceded by the negotiators - in return, not for a sick pay scheme as such, but the Company's agreement to open negotiations on this subject in the first instance.

It is fairly clear, from our previous discussions, that it would be the women workers who would bear the main impact of this 'cost' attached, thereby, to the 'bargain' which had been struck between representatives of both the Company and the Union. But, what further implications might then flow from this? In the first place, we would argue that the women workers' bargaining position would be undermined overall, as a consequence of management's stronger position to maintain and increase their disciplinary offensives - an immediate result. And, of course, their bargaining resources would be reduced as the women struggled to protect employment security and job controls in the face of the higher levels of intimidation maintained on the shopfloor. However, we would also propose a further set of implications - this time pertaining to the institutional structure of representation within the union itself. Because when we look at how the officials attempted to mediate or impose management's terms on the membership, we can see straight away that this could only be achieved at the cost of diminishing the responsiveness of those structures of interest representation from the members' point of view.

#### THE SICK PAY SCHEME

The question of a sick pay scheme had first been raised with the Company by the union's full-time officer in 1972. This was in the context of the Conservative government's statutory incomes policy when trade unions generally had shifted attention to improving 'fringe-benefits' - for which there was plenty of scope in the manual sector.

Little progress had been made in negotiations over the next five years. While the Company refused to consider a scheme, giving as their reason, the women workers' high level of absenteeism and the fear it would be 'abused', the full-time officer retained the item on his 'agenda', which was increasingly constricted by pay policy and less reflective of his membership's demands. By 1976, the officials were being put under heavy pressure - from the male membership especially - because of the union's support for continued wage restraint. The wage claim for that year was limited to £6 for all - with no possibility (this time) of finding anything 'extra' for the men. While the Company were also to be found more amenable to considering alternative ways of staving off "possible disruption", there were strong incentives for the union negotiators to "find whatever else was allowable", in order to appease their increasingly disaffected membership.

Not that the latter were demanding a sick pay scheme. On the contrary, there is no evidence that the membership in general showed (or had ever shown) interest in this at all.

"I'll read out the minutes of the last meeting and then ask for 'matters arising' - no response. They just sit there. So sometimes I insist - come on now, surely you want to talk about pensions and sick pay? I think they OUGHT to be asking about important things like pensions and sickness - that we've been in and out for for weeks. "  
Mary (Branch Secretary)(47)

In view of the employer's hostility, this lack of interest might have had to have been partly constructed - given the difficulties which would have arisen for the full-time officers if demands for its implementation had been really pressed. And it does not appear that the terms of any scheme had ever been proposed or set out for discussion

by the membership.

Certainly the terms of the absenteeism agreement were not. As the branch secretary later described it, this had been negotiated by the convenors, "under pressure from the membership". How could this have been the case? Indeed, its rationale had not been initially presented in terms of the sick pay scheme negotiations at all - but movement of labour, which was why the idea had picked up a degree of support from some of the women members. It will be recalled that absenteeism increased the incidence of movement of labour and doubling-up - the necessity for both of which was blamed entirely on female absentees: by management, in whose interest it was; by the union officials, who upheld the agreement; by the men, who were not affected; and, not surprisingly, often by the women workers themselves. Much heat generated in discussions about what should be done about movement of labour, could be, and very often was, therefore, channelled into the question of how to deal with the absentees.

The Company's new disciplinary procedure dated 25th June, 1976 was, first presented, not to the branch meeting of July 1st, but the branch committee which met a week later. Here it was agreed that acceptance, for a trial period of three months, be recommended to a meeting of the joint shop steward's committee planned to take place shortly afterwards.

This meeting of shop stewards from all factories as a 'joint body', was the first to be held, and it was very nearly the last:

"It was a shambles. The shop stewards discussed movement of labour - it had already been decided that the answer was to tighten up on the absenteeism agreement and bring in the sick pay scheme... But at the joint shop stewards meeting the shop stewards threw out the absenteeism agreement. It was just daft - didn't make sense at all. The convenors wanted nothing more to do with the meeting - what they'd decided was being over-ruled. So no other meeting has been held since".  
Mary (Branch Secretary)(48)

The branch committee (mostly comprising the officials, convenors and their deputies) decided to ignore this and to stand by their former recommendation for acceptance of the new procedure. But this had still to be presented to the branch which next met in September.

At this meeting the full-time officer gave his report in the course of which he recorded his statement, set out above, in the minutes. No vote was taken and no discussion is recorded as having taken place. The branch committee subsequently deemed that:

"As this matter was not questioned at Branch, it was decided that the agreement should go through for a trial period of three months and will be raised again at a Branch committee meeting for a further discussion, after the trial period".  
Branch Committee Minutes 17.9.76.

Held now by the declared policy of the union, it was the stewards who then had to mediate the 'costs of the bargain' to the membership on the shop floor.

The focal point of opposition which soon surfaced, came from a group of male workers at Waterfall Lane. Shop stewards from this factory, had, it seems, led the initial resistance to the agreement at the joint shop stewards meeting - where they

had found wider support. Now the 'Roband' men were refusing to be bound by it. They agreed with the reasoning which had been offered for the necessity of tightening the disciplinary rules in the first place - the 'troublesome' absenteeism of the females - and so they did not see why the procedure should be applied to them.

The branch secretary records in her minutes of the October committee:

"Questions were raised by Waterfall Lane that certain members had not accepted the Absenteeism Agreement. It was explained, however, that the Branch had accepted the implementation of the agreement on a trial period of three months and that it was in the interest of all our members that this agreement be accepted, if we were to press the Company for the implementation of a sick pay scheme. It was proposed that the Company would be informed before the end of the trial period that we would expect the implementation of a Sick Pay Scheme.

It was reported by Paul Silver that Mr. Stuart was already looking into sick pay schemes at other factories".

Branch Committee Minutes - October 1976.

The 'trial period' was due to end in December, but no announcement had been made and no dates had been given to the shop stewards; so management continued to operate the new procedure. Since little progress had been made in the sick pay negotiations the officials also preferred to allow the absenteeism agreement to continue. No proper branch meeting was held in January because of bad weather, so the position still remained confused in February, when a long motion was tabled for the branch meeting by the Roband men at Waterfall Lane. (49) As the discussion is recorded in the minutes, the position was left entirely unclear: (50)

"It was reported by Paul Silver that the Company had not conceded to a sick pay scheme and the Branch requested that we should now be allowed to return to the Old Absenteeism Agreement. It was felt that by not accepting a tightening up on absenteeism that we were not in a very strong position to get a sick pay scheme at BSR Limited.

Branch minutes, February 1977. (emphasis in original)

The branch secretary was, however, quite clear about the position herself:

"Well, of course we knew the agreement had come to an end - but we wanted to keep it going and to make the rest all agree - so that we could offer something in return for sick pay..."

Mary (Branch Secretary) (51)

This policy was not likely to succeed at Waterfall Lane, however, as became clear on one of her visits to this factory.

Dick (deputy convenor)

"What's frightened them off is the way it was dropped on them. Also Tony Stuart said he'd come back in a fortnight on the sick... and he hasn't".

Mary (branch secretary)

"Well, ignore the agreement then - go back to the old one".

Ettie (new convenor)

"Would we be in our rights?"

Mary: "Well, he hasn't come back - and the new agreement's at an end".

Ettie: "So if we have a warning today, we can stop it back to three days in a month?"

Mary: "Don't tell the others - this is for Waterfall Lane at the moment. ...I'd have thought you'd have done that already.

Ettie: "No. We wanted confirmation..."

Field Notes. 23.2.1977.

At the joint shop stewards' meeting a week later a female shop steward asked for clarification on the position.

"Reversion to the old absenteeism agreement - is that immediately?"

Mary (branch secretary)

"When you like. I don't know if the Company's been informed..."

Shop Steward:

"Would you clarify what the old agreement was?"

Mary: (vague) "...all I remember... three days in a month".  
Field notes. 28.2.1977.

On the shopfloor management continued to operate the new procedures. They told the stewards, many of whom remained confused as to their position, that they (the management) had not been informed to do otherwise.

And the Company continued to stall on the sick pay scheme until a series of strikes in March re-injected some energy into the negotiations. Again, this spur did not come directly from the members. The issues underlying the strikes were pay (restrained under the social contract) and for the women, most pressingly - working conditions. The official's announcement that they were 'trying to achieve a sick pay scheme for our members' was actually greeted with groans at one of the strike meetings.

But the terms of the scheme had still not been discussed with the membership, and when a group of male stewards presented the officials with some of their own proposals, chief among which was sick pay from the Company at the level of average earnings, they were not welcomed. The officials clearly feared the



consequences of raising the members expectations, given the Company's recalcitrance. What then was being negotiated?

The scheme, in its final form, emerged in the summer of 1976 for a 'trial period' of one year. It was designed so as to benefit the women workers to the minimum extent, "so as not to encourage abuse". A sum of £2.50 (plus an extra £1 for male shift workers), payable for 15 days in a year, could, if not claimed, be 'saved' - as a bonus paid out twice yearly. (52) This sum was said to produce, for the average male worker with a mortgage and dependents - close to average earnings, when taken in conjunction with his (state) sickness benefit and tax relief. But a large number of the married women workers who did not pay a full insurance stamp, would not get this. There was a one year service qualification and a 5 day 'waiting' period - "to prevent abuse". "But still a woman can have four weeks off with the kids and get £37.50". (Union Official). The men blamed the women workers for the fact that they had not been able to get a better scheme.

Meanwhile, eighteen months after the sick pay agreement had been signed, the women workers and their representatives were still trying to push back the disciplinary threshold in respect of absenteeism, which management had successfully assaulted.

"Management are still trying to enforce the 2 days, She sent a memo off, Mary did - but she never received an answer... I don't think".  
Sally (Sub-assembly)(53)

"Well, the union, in 1975, we recognised 3 days absent, before they were taken into the office for warning... two days, you were allowed off before supplying a doctor's note. Well, the

BSR are trying to say now - that one day off, should be a doctor's note, plus - going in for a warning. Now, fortunately, the majority of the shop stewards are not recognising that anyway - which is a good thing. But that is a loop-hole BSR try and get through... They're making rules up...

I went in to John Smith, not so long ago about absenteeism, and he said, 'I've sent a memo round - two days! And I says, 'NO!' I said, 'the document 1975' - and I produced it, because I keep all my papers - I says, 'it was between management and union. When you bring me another memo with that - "between management and union" - I will recognise it'. I said, 'but not your personal memo! - Its gotta be jointly between union and management'.

Well, as I say... little things like that he's tryin' to get in - and the majority of 'em, he gets through."

Jill (Supervisor - final assembly)(54)

My emphasis

#### THE PRODUCTIVITY DEAL:

In 1977, having announced record profits for the previous year, the Company succumbed to pressure from the workforce and agreed to skip Stage 2 (5%) and to follow the Labour government's Stage 3 pay guidelines instead. This permitted wage increases up to 10% and the introduction of a productivity deal.

Consultants (Inbucon) had been hired and produced an 'off the peg' scheme, which management submitted to the shop stewards at the end of that year.

"...Course they give the shop stewards the 54 pages on Inbucon, and they were just frightened to death about it, you know - 'Stuff it! Throw it out!' And Paul Silver sayin': 'Look! - There's a couple of quid... if its only a couple of quid, there's a couple of quid there for you NOW - at the moment, you know - for doing nothing!'"

Ernie (deputy convenor)(55) emphasis in original.

"I tell you this - I didn't understand a page - not a page of it. And we did ask for a Mr... Clive I think... we asked if the shop stewards could meet him - and as he could go through it, and just tell us the pages that were relevant for us. But that was asked for at the branch - it was promised, but we never... he never came round. And when we raised it again - he'd left! he'd left Inbucon, you know - and I said, 'Where's he working - bloody BSR?!'"  
Jill (Supervisor - final assembly)(56)

The scheme was based on the principle of comparing the output in standard work minutes, with minutes (already) 'paid for' in wages. (57) With greater productivity this differential would be increased, as a result of 'savings' in (mostly) labour costs.

We are interested in the pattern of distribution of this 'gain'.

"It's split 50/50. And the firm have 50% for reinvestment, and we have 50% to be distributed amongst the workforce, you know - 50% of the saving"  
Ernie (Maintenance deputy convenor)(58)

The firm managed, from the start, to swing the balance more in its favour - by 'clawing back' payments due for the first year.

According to the Industrial Relations director, the Department of Employment had brought pressure to bear, as a consequence of the previous year's 10% wage settlement, by threatening to 'blacklist' the Company and withdraw government contracts. (59) Withholding the back-pay due on the productivity deal, was justified on the grounds that the firm was, thereby, 'bringing itself back into line'.

But still, as Ernie pointed out, in theory at least, 50% of the savings was, at some point, available to be distributed amongst the workforce. Was there any pattern to the 'balance' of distribution to be discerned here?

Despite the fact that the firm had refused to guarantee this minimum, the membership had been assured by their union officials that the scheme should never yield less than 4%: "They've got a similar thing in Scotland and it averages out at about 6% you see". And, indeed, notification of the first payment was, in line with this - a lump sum at 4%, going back for sixteen weeks.

"And there was a big stink about that...

On the list, the craftsmen were shown as getting the most, and the women got the least. Something like £70, £60, £50... In a lump sum.

And the women said: 'No! We'd rather not have it at all... Anyway, one way and another, it ended up getting paid out".

Ernie (Maintenance deputy convenor)(60)

"The back payment on the productivity deal gave maintenance men etc. about £70, and the women on the shop floor - the full-timers, £32.

And that upset the women. Because we expected that the Inbucon, the productivity would be pound for pound - straight across the shop floor. And this was what we wanted it to be - we expected it to be, and it wasn't". Madge (Moulding Shop)(61)

"The women seem to be at the bottom of the ladder all the time and they work the hardest.

...The membership wanted flat-rate, across the board. The men wanted more - they work shifts and hours - and with the productivity, the more they earn, the more they get; which the women on the shop floor didn't agree with at the time. The women voted at branch against it. They wanted the same money as the men".

Lorna (Final Assembly)(62)

"We had a hell of a branch meeting. All the members went and threw it out. We demanded pound for pound, straight across... But we didn't get it - they paid it out on a percentage. It wasn't what the members wanted".

Madge (Moulding Shop)(63)

"It was supposed to have been thrown out. The hall was absolutely packed, because there was a terrible feeling about this productivity. They'd had a bit of paper showing the 4% payment. And they knew, on the lines that other departments - where they could get 120 performance - were getting more than they ever could! So they all went to the meeting; and they all voted for it to be thrown out, but it wasn't.

They wouldn't have minded... if it had been paid on the 40 hours at 4%. But they did object to the fact that some take more of the bonus with overtime and shifts and percentage higher earnings.

You see here, I don't think they've got down to women being equal with men..."

Nora (Final Assembly)(64)

"What they thought, you see - they thought they were going to put the £90, £70 and £60 together... er, what's the average of that - say its £70, for instance... Well, obviously, it wouldn't work like that, because you're talkin' about 500 blokes and about 9,000 women! So, all them £90's and £70's go together, and we'd all have ended up with about £51 - you know what I mean?"

Ernie (Maintenance, deputy convenor)(65)

When arguments justifying the differential in men and women workers' wages were posed in terms of 'skills' and 'training/ qualifications', or even in terms of 'the breadwinner'; they were more strongly bolstered ideologically, and thus, more difficult to oppose. But when it came to 'productivity' - the women workers knew who was doing the 'producing'.

"There's a dispute about it not being a 'fair share across the board'. The percentage payment means - even those working Saturdays and Sundays BUT NOT PRODUCING still get the 4%. They feel that the ones who do produce aren't getting a fair share of the bonus".

Sarah (Press Shop)(66) emphasis in original.

Whichever way it was viewed, the women could not justify their contribution to production being valued at an absolute sum equivalent to half of what the skilled men received. Nor, again, one which came to less than that received by a (shift working) serviceman on the same grade as they were. And between the women workers themselves, it was felt, there could be no justification for the differentials produced by percentage payments.

"The productivity bonus is the biggest racket out! Even on the shop floor - take Pearl's section, sub-plates. They can get 120 performance while on the lines, we can't reach 100. And so, they get more bonus. It causes ill feeling... on the lines".

Nora (Final Assembly)(67)

So the women members went to the branch meeting and voted for a flat-rate distribution, to no avail because: "one way and another, it ended up getting paid out".

"Then at the next branch meeting - hardly anyone attended. It was asked why no one was there. And a shop steward from Old Hill stood up and said - 'Well, when you have a thing thrown out at Branch, you don't expect it to be carried through!' And Paul Silver said it would have cost too much money to have had it done, and gone through again. And so...

The attitude of the girls is - well why should we work? See how much the men're getting, eg. the maintenance - on weekend work... And the girls on the line say - 'look at us sweating for their money!'

The girls didn't want it like that. The girls wanted say, £2 each person, in the packet, on its own at the end of the month".

Nora (Final Assembly)(68)

Patterns of representation and the differentiation of interests  
between men and women

(Do you think the men understand the  
women's problems?)

"Some, may do - you know, there are some. I mean there have been some that have stuck up for the women and said - 'they work damn hard, they should have a bit more money - they should have a bit more of the cake'. But there's some think - 'huh!' You know - they're out for themselves you see. And... you get the women saying - 'they're getting all the damn money - we'm getting nothing...'.  
Edna (Final Assembly) (69)

One of the main benefits of unionisation to the workforce is the establishment of a system of representation together with appropriate representational structures. These operated in two main directions, one in relation to management, the other in relation to the decision-making bodies of the trade union organisation itself. These are, of course, linked. And one of the main reasons put forward today, for women in the workplace not benefitting from trade union organisation and collective bargaining to the extent that might be expected - given their increased membership - is their lack of representation in these institutional structures. Because men don't necessarily share them, it is now realised that for female workers' interests, problems and experiences to be properly reflected and addressed in organisational terms, women must have a presence in decision-making positions, for instance, as committee members, delegates and office-holders. Conversely, where men dominate these positions and structures, we might expect (although it is not always fashionable to suggest) policies are likely to match their

interests the more closely.

How far can the question of women's (under) representation explain the problems we have just identified at workplace and branch level? We are referring to two aspects especially here. On the one hand there is an apparent weakness in the women's ability to put forward or pursue demands, in relation to management or the union, on their own behalf. On the other, there is a seeming, low level of responsiveness - not necessarily deriving directly from the same source - in respect of the union's representational structures, to the women worker's problems and interests. Both of these features have been shown to have implications for collective bargaining - which we have illustrated in respect of two agreements. In order to examine how far these features can be explained by women's possible under-representation despite their overwhelming numerical dominance, we need now, to look at how the pattern of interest differentiation between men and women at BSR fits in with the structure of representation at every level of the union's organisation locally.

#### DIFFERENTIATION OF INTERESTS

In Part Two of this thesis, we have set out numerous lines of interest differentiation between men and women both inside and outside the workplace, which are structured by the sexual division of labour. In collective organisations, these interests are brought together and have, by some means and to some extent, to be reconciled. Their status and priority is negotiated by the parties concerned (or their representatives). And it is clear that in



the outcome, where they are cross-cutting or mutually exclusive, all interests will not be accommodated equally. The internal processes through which this outcome is reached are, therefore, important subjects for the parties to consider.

They certainly were from the point of view of the male workers. Because, being so firmly in a minority, any process such as a straight vote of the whole membership, would be certain to mean that they would lose any decisions on which they stood opposed. As a result, the male workers vehemently disliked this system, although it was rarely operated - only being used on a regular basis to decide the pattern of holidays and to signify (individual) acceptance or rejection of the annual wage deal. The men preferred other forum for decision-making, where there was more room to manoeuvre, such as those where they could construct a majority (eg. by 'flooding' the branch meeting); or where they could operate through representatives (discussed further below).

We can briefly illustrate both this process of interest differentiation and decision-making with an example taken from one of the few areas where a straight vote across the whole of the membership was used. This example is particularly interesting, because the lines of separation dividing the men and women in the workplace can be seen to derive from the domestic and power relations of the household - and so does Michael's choice!

At BSR the year's holidays were organised well in advance. The non-statutory days were arranged in various combinations, around a basic pattern which provided for a series of short breaks throughout the year - with no "too long" periods in between (thought to be the cause of strikes and disruption). (70)

Two or three different options on the arrangement of days more (or fewer) before (or after) the Christmas day, for example, were offered for the workers to vote on.

"Christmas holidays! An instant where a vote is taken - what are the best days to have off for the Christmas holidays? So a vote comes round - which is a fair way of deciding something - by a vote. But what chance have we got - US MEN, of our type of holiday? When 90% are the ladies - which are solely responsible for what we get for Christmas... and shopping days, etc... So they heavily out-vote us, on matters like that.

The ladies, obviously, would prefer to have more days - some of the days - taken off the end of the Christmas holiday and put onto the beginning, so they can get the shopping done in advance. It limits them greatly doesn't it, having to work full-time, shopping amongst the milling crowds in the little bit of time left after work. And getting towards Christmas, Saturday to Saturday is a very big jump. Where you can shop in the week its better, but to shop all day - their minds are relaxed they know exactly what they want - Christmas period. Because the ladies - we don't have to do anything - the ladies, they look after all the Christmas presents, all our cooking, catering, everything. So obviously, to them, its better to have a few days before Christmas than after.

But the men's point of view, its drink, drink! Social drinking hours after the big event of Christmas, you know. They look at it from an entirely different view-point.

The men, the majority want the time after Christmas rather than before; which to me, isn't as important a vote as the ladies wanting the shopping days". Michael (Carpenter)(71) emphasis in original.

One of the most crucial lines of interest, however, between the men's ranks and the women's concerned pay. To the extent that the males, as indirect workers, perceived that the size of the cake to be shared depended upon the rate of output of the women workers, we have identified a relationship of 'co-exploitation' whereby their interests did not concur with the women working at a slower pace. The productivity deal picked up on this relationship nicely, with the men reaping a greater reward for the increase in effort/output - effectively all manual in the labour-intensive assembly areas.

(Do you think the women have to work at too fast a pace?)

"Well, the problem is, how are you going to slow them down? You've got a productivity deal - on the figures that they've worked to previously. And the only way we're going to beat those figures and get more money is, they've got to work harder".

Terry (Maintenance Chargehand) (72)

Apart from the size of the cake, there was the question of the size of the share. The male workers had to guard their differentials carefully.

"Working as a shop steward - I'm only dealing with my own men you see. If you've got a mixture of men and women it could be difficult in the equality field. (How so?) They would get to hear what the men are earning - more so than if a man was solely dealing with men, he's got no women listening to him - when they start talking."

(Why do you think that could cause a problem here?)

"Jealousy. Just plain jealousy."

(Do you think the women have got grounds to be jealous of the men's wage?) "They certainly have! And likewise the men have just rights to be jealous of some of the women".

(Why? What could the men be jealous of the women for?)

"I'll give you some instances:

No draughts behind them while they're working. Cleaner toilets; heat-temperatures at work. They look after the women more so than the men. Now I would say this is justified because there are three times more women than there are men! Also the fact that they are not quite so hardy with draughts and winds as the men are. So..."

(How long have you been asking?)

"About six months for one particular - heat, radiators".

(At the moment its too cold?)

"No, we're not complaining its too cold. But there are, according to modern factory regulations - ours isn't that temperature. But we aren't really complaining much, we're sort of used to it. But factory regulations are such... we aren't shouting so loud as other people, so we won't get ours quite yet".

(In what ways do you think the women have got cause to be jealous of the men?)  
"Oh money. The colossal earnings that the men have got here. But if the women would like to work here seven days a week, they can take home the same money - that's my answer to that!"  
Michael (Carpenter) (73)

Also, it seems, there was more to be lost than differentials:

(Do you think women should be more militant about getting equality?)  
"I think there are enough organisations looking after the technicalities of it, the legal positions - the watchdogs, they are there and they are working towards it. But I wouldn't think it would be good, on the whole, for women to be more militant - we've got enough divorces already..."  
Gordon (Storeman) (74)

As we have already pointed out, the differentiation of interest between the men and women was structured by both their (unequal) relationship and also their (separate) experiences outside the workplace and within it. The men's views on the women workers' problems: for example, disciplining absenteeism and the 'absenteeism agreement', were coloured to the extent that they did not themselves, experience these; and also to the extent that they tended to adopt a managerial perspective - it was "troublesome" - together with the employer's perspective - it was "costly" (affecting the 'size of the cake'?) (75)

These differences in interests and experience on the part of the men were, of course, perceived by the women, as was their basis in inequality.

(What do you think about the levels of pay here?)  
"Good - for the men". (And for the women?)  
"The women should be paid more. Because they work harder. But for a woman, it is a good rate of pay, very good - but, I still say they deserve more, especially on the main lines - have you seen them?"

(What do you think of the differential between what the men earn and what the women earn here?)

"I'm not sure really, what the men earn - I've got a vague idea... I suppose you could say it was for skill - but is there equality?

The skilled men - well, they say they're skilled- I s'pose its what they call the 'BSR skilled', you know. I don't think they're really worth their money. I think the women are far greater... you know, I think they deserve the money far more than the men - in a lot of instances, you know, the women, they really work, they're working very hard. And we're supposed to have equal pay and equal rights, but we aren't you know! No way, are we equal...

For instance, if a woman has a day off, or if a woman has two days off - she's dragged into the office, and she's got to explain why she's had two days off, or they expect a doctor's certificate from them. Now, I don't suppose this happens to the men. It just goes to prove that, although this is a woman's factory - they've got no idea of understanding a woman's problems have they?

Because, women - you know, as I say, we are supposed to be equal, but no way - because, a woman's role in the home is entirely different to a man's isn't it? And, if one of the kids are bad, you don't find daddy stopping at home, you find mummy has to stop at home. Well, they don't understand here, you see. They think that the woman should still come out to work and... its all wrong! There's lots of problems, lots of ways that we aren't equal. I don't think we ever will be myself. What do you think?"

Sally (Sub-assembly)(76)

Rev hasis in original

How were men and women's interests represented in the union's organisational structure at the local level? We can look first at who held office and sat on the committees.

#### OFFICE HOLDING

It is soon clear that male members dominated most of the major offices of the union at factory and branch level. First, while women outnumbered men in the workforce and shop steward body at every factory, until the end of 1976, all the convenors bar two

had been men. Even after this had changed, male stewards still held the position of Chairperson in the Shop Stewards' Committees at factory level. Secondly, while the full-time branch administrative officer was a female, the union's chief negotiating officer was a man and the branch had always been Chaired by a male, right from the beginning.

It is interesting to look at the careers of two men, both of whom achieved positions in the union organisation at this local level: one as branch chairman, the other as convenor.

Terry was a chargehand in the maintenance department working in the moulding shop. Joining the firm in 1968, he had retained his membership of the AUEW for a couple of years after the recognition agreement had been signed with the GMWU, until he had found himself being disciplined with no-one to represent him. He had taken over the position of shop steward for tool room and maintenance workers almost immediately; pursuing a grievance they had about overtime. And within a few weeks he had found himself on a shop stewards' training course at the union's college. (77)

"We falsified the number of people I was looking after, if I remember rightly, to get me in".

(Why did you have to do that?)

"Well, I was causing that much trouble, I think Paul wanted to get me under control a bit. So he said - I want you on a course - a shop stewards' course, to indoctrinate me into the GMWU! They just put on more people than I was looking after. There were 36-7 odd, in the tool-room, and maintenance - only about 18 - at that time. So instead of saying 55 or something like that, they said I was looking after 150 I think!"

Terry (Maintenance chargehand) (78)

In June 1973, 8 months after joining the union, Terry was nominated by his convenor for the position of branch chair and took over from the previous (male) incumbent, who had gone on to work for the union as a full-time official.

(How did you become Chairman?)

"I'm still trying to work it out myself! I hadn't been in the union that long - I hadn't been a shop steward that long. Then, I s'pose I was the only one causing trouble!"  
Terry (maintenance chargehand)(79)

Terry held this position for three years before losing the vote to Trevor Bridges, deputy convenor at Waterfall Lane, a factory where male workers had recently been showing a lot of militancy.

(So its always been a man - the branch Chair?)

"Yes". (Do they have women's names put forward?)

"No. I can't remember ever having any".

Terry (Maintenance Chargehand)(80)

No longer a shop steward, and finding himself now on the outside of an organisation whose inner-workings he had for years been party to, Terry set about finding himself another constituency. When the January (1977) elections came up, he had got himself, first nominated and then elected as a shop steward to represent (male) chargehands, setters and inspectors and quality control. A somewhat polyglot 'grouping' some 70 strong spread throughout the factory, they had never had "their own" shop steward before. In a matter of weeks, Terry once again came to the forefront in a dispute involving maintenance workers in the moulding shop. When the position of convenor fell vacant in March he was nominated for the position, but withdrew when

management stipulated he would have to work on days if he was elected.

Ernie was also a maintenance fitter. He had joined the union when he first came to work at BSR in 1971 but had dropped out soon afterwards, leaving the Company in January 1974. He rejoined the union on his return in June 1975, because by that time the 100% membership agreement had been signed. In January 1978 a new shop steward had been elected to represent the maintenance fitters:

"I used to give him a bit of stick - and pushed this, that and the other... And in the end he jacked it in you see".

Ernie (Maintenance - deputy convenor)(81)

Ernie stood and was elected in March. Shortly afterwards the Chairman of the shop stewards' committee at Stourbridge resigned (he had represented the toolroom) and Ernie was voted in to replace him. In July - some three months later - there was a struggle over the convenorship. Both convenor, Pearl (sub-assembly) and deputy, Gordon (storeman) had been elected into position following the resignation of Ellen fifteen months earlier. The deputy had then led a bid to replace Pearl as convenor, and when he failed to get a vote of no confidence passed against her in the shop stewards' committee, he resigned. Ernie, chairing the meeting, was nominated and seconded for the vacant position, along with another female shop steward.

"Then someone said that it had been passed at branch, that if you had a woman convenor, you had to have a male deputy and if you had a male convenor - you have a woman deputy".

Ernie (Deputy convenor - Maintenance)(82)



When this had been pointed out, Ernie's nomination stood alone,  
"and it was passed virtually unanimously".

"I don't know how I've managed it. I've only been  
a shop steward eight months and I've gone from  
Shop Steward to Chairman to Deputy Convenor".

When Pearl resigned as Convenor in the following year, Ernie  
was elected to succeed her, narrowly defeating another female  
steward who had also been nominated.

Unlike Terry, Ernie had little interest in the branch. He  
had never attended a branch meeting up to the time he was elected  
shop steward and had only been to three in the eight months  
following this. The first visit was as a consequence of the  
'craftsmen's dispute'. Early in 1977, maintenance and toolroom  
workers in all four factories had begun organising in order to  
make a serious bid to restore their pay differentials. On  
several occasions they had switched off the power supplies -  
closing down all four factories - while they held meetings (from  
which other workers, and at first even the convenors were excluded).  
Meanwhile, the majority of the other workers were laid off without  
pay.

"We heard a rumour they were all going to go and  
pass something against us (at branch) - so we, as  
craftsmen from all factories, decided that we were  
all going to go up like.

...I've only been to two branch meetings since.  
I went to one in between, you know, just to see how  
things were going. And then Pearl was away ill and  
I had to go because I was (acting) convenor...

Well, now I'm deputy convenor, I should think I'll  
have to go - its because I have to go, you know. I  
don't find them very helpful one way or another".  
Ernie (Deputy convenor - maintenance)(83)

Both men had made very rapid progress once they had come to the fore, without any apparent background of involvement in the Union or BSR previous to their taking office. They were both workers in the highest skill grade who had achieved prominence in the course of this group showing a certain degree of militancy. And both enjoyed the support, and to some extent, 'sponsorship' of the union's full-time officials. This was the case both directly - as with Terry's prompt training and promotion to Branch Chairman - and indirectly. Ernie's nomination for deputy convenor was left unopposed as a result of a 'rule' prompted by the branch secretary some months earlier at a meeting of shop stewards (not the branch).

Both the convenor and deputy were of course, elected by the body of shop stewards in each factory, the majority of whom were women. Prior to 1975, however, only one factory had ever had a female convenor. Ellen had held this position from the beginning (February 1970) at the Stourbridge factory, where there were more women in the workforce, and, at the time of her election, even fewer men. In fact, the deputy convenor was a woman too - Pearl being voted in at the same time - but Ellen, who built up strong personal controls, preferred to operate on her own and never involved her deputy at all. (When she was finally forced out of office in 1977, Pearl succeeded her. This time, however, the deputy was male - according to 'rule'.)

At Waterfall Lane, the male convenor who worked on nights was made redundant in 1975 when this shift was phased out. His female deputy succeeded him - the first woman to take over this office from a man - and the subconvenor was a semi-skilled male (also relatively

unusual). At the Old Hill factory on the other hand, both positions had been held by males until 1974 when a female steward was elected as sub-convenor on the death of the previous incumbent.

When the male convenor at Old Hill left the Company in 1976, to take up employment with the Union (like his (male) predecessor had done four years earlier), it was apparent that the female deputy was likely to be elected in his place. And it was fears about the reactions of the male workers at their loss of representation at this level on the part of the branch secretary, which had led to her instigation of the new 'rule': a female convenor would always have to have a male deputy (and vice versa). There were grounds for this apprehension on the branch secretary's part, because the female convenor at Waterfall Lane had been all but driven out of office by the male workers there. Within a year she had been replaced by another male, with a female as deputy. (84) But by 1977 again, the female deputies had finally all 'come through' for the first time, and for a short period, all the convenors were female. (85) A further change from 1976 onwards, also relevant to this question of the different levels of representation, was that deputy convenors became increasingly involved in negotiations at factory level and above - being officially admitted to Stage 5 meetings around the same time that the new 'rule' was formulated.

Clearly, although outnumbered in every factory - overall, by 5:1, at Stourbridge by 7:1, at Waterfall Lane and Old Hill by 4:1 - male workers were over represented when it came to office-holding in the union's organisation at the local level. When we look at

the committees underpinning this structure, we can again see this was true.

#### ON COMMITTEES.

The main policy-making body (as averse to policy-makers) was the branch committee. This had been set up in the first place by the full-time official in December 1973. It comprised a chair person and 10 members - three from each of the three main factories (including the convenors) and one from the Portersfield toolroom (a separate unit). In practice, the deputy convenors were included in the three as well. The full-time officers both attended. And in 1976, a representative from the new Garretts Lane factories made their first appearance.

Over the years the male/female balance on this committee had stayed around 1:1. In 1976 with two female convenors, the ratio had moved slightly in the women's favour, but by 1977, with four women as convenors, there were also four male deputies who, with the chairman and the representative from the Portersfield toolroom, redressed the balance again. (All those men were, moreover, drawn from the skilled grades).

Rivalling the branch committee, in many respects, as a policy-making body of the union's organisation at a local level, was the joint shop steward's committee. This, as we have already noted, was a more recent innovation, set up as a result of a decision passed at the branch in April 1976. And it's decision-making status in relation to the branch committee was, to some extent, always ambivalent.

The joint shop steward's committee was made up of stewards from all (record-changer) factories and, over time, numbered from 70 to over 80 strong. (A body which, as we have already noted, made up the core of regular attenders at the branch meeting as well). We can see from Table 6 that the male workers at BSR were represented over twice as well on this committee as the women were.

Table 6 Representation of male workers at Stourbridge, Old Hill, and Waterfall Lane Factories.

M A L E S		
% of workforce and % of Shop Steward Body.		
Stourbridge	12	27
Old Hill	20	29
Waterfall Lane	20	63
TOTAL	16	37

Sources: Inbucon Report and Branch records.

Men, comprising some 16% of the workforce of the three main factories in 1977-8, constituted well over a third (37%) of the body of shop stewards and at least 50% of the branch committee. Since it is already clear that the balance of representation in the decision-making structures of the union locally, was significantly shaped by representation at factory level, we need to consider this in more detail. Before doing so, it is worth

noting that it also, crucially, underpins the trade union's regional and national policy-making structures as well. The branch minutes record that the following people were nominated and elected for the regional council and national congress of the union.

Table 7 Nominations to Regional Council and National Congress of the QMWU from the BSR Branch.

Date	Male/Female Position		Body
6. 3. 1973.	TM(m)	Branch Chairman - elected	Regional Council
5.12. 1973.	NT(f) CA(m) AP(m)	Convenor-Stourbridge Convenor-Waterfall Lane Convenor-Old Hill- <u>elected</u>	National Congress
12.12. 1974.	AP(m) CA(m)	Convenor-Old Hill Convenor-Waterfall Lane- <u>elected</u>	National Congress
20.11. 1975	EH(f) AP(m)	? Convenor-Old Hill- <u>elected</u>	National Congress
30.11. 1976	TB(m)	Branch Chairman- <u>elected</u> (ex-deputy convenor- Waterfall Lane)	National Congress
24. 2. 1977	SW(f) IB(f)	? Convenor-Old Hill- <u>elected</u>	Regional Council

To the extent that in most unions, shop stewards and convenors commonly comprise the core of union lay-activists and delegates, it must be the case more generally that representation in the policy-making structures of trade unions is fundamentally shaped by the pattern of representation at workplace level. We therefore need to examine the structure of representation in the BSR factories more closely.

# REPRESENTATION IN THE FACTORY.

The overall picture reveals that there were over twice as many male shop stewards in every factory as might have been expected given the proportion of men in the workforce.

Table 8      Representatives and Members in Stourbridge, Old Hill, and Waterfall Lane factories 1977-78.

Factory	FEMALE			MALE			TOTAL		
	Reps.	Members	Ratio	Reps.	Members	Ratio	Reps.	Members	Ratio
Stourbridge	19	3282	1:173	7	469	1:67	26	3751	1:144
Old Hill	22	2124	1:97	9	519	1:58	31	2643	1:85
Waterfall Lane	7	1057	1:151	12	276	1:23	19	1333	1:70
	48	6463	1:135	28	1264	1:45	76	7727	1:102

## Ratio M : F in workforce

Stourbridge    1:7 )  
 Old Hill       1:4 ) All 1:5  
 Waterfall Lane 1:4 )

## Ratio M : F of Shop Stewards

Stourbridge    1:3 )  
 Old Hill       1:2 ) All 1:2  
 Waterfall Lane 2:1 )

Sources: Inbucon Report and branch records.

Moreover, if it is assumed that the shop stewards mainly represented workers (or the interests of workers) of their own sex, then male workers appear to have been three times better represented than the women overall - with one representative for 45 male members compared with one for every 135 women. But we need to look at how constituencies were organised within the factories to see how far this pattern of representation was borne out in practice.

Although at Stourbridge, women outnumbered the men rather more heavily - by 7 or 8 to 1, the pattern was little different from the other factories. The body of Shop Stewards here numbered some 26 - 19 women and 7 men, a ratio of 3:1. There were, therefore, more than twice as many male shop stewards as might have been expected, given the structure of the labour force. One reason this was a relatively high proportion, was due to the fact that, at the time, two men represented constituencies of women. However, this does not alter the fact that the male workers, as such, were substantially over represented.

As we can see from the Table 9 , three quarters of the male workforce was organised in constituencies on average no greater than 50 members per Shop Steward; representation of the skilled groups was nearer 1:30. In a workforce some 4,000 strong, the 'average' constituency size was approximately 160 members.

Three quarters of the female workforce were in constituencies larger than this - the average for the women being around 180. Skilled male workers were thus about four times better represented than the women.



Table 9

Trade Union Representation of Men and Women workers  
(Stourbridge factory 1978, figures approximate.)(a)

ss	section	constituents (approx)		
		female : male	Total	
Pip	subassembly	296	4	300
Pearl	"	300	-	300
Sally	"	286	7	293
Pru	"	266	5	271
Janet	"	200	6	206
Edna	final assembly	140	2	142
Lorna	"	140	2	142
Barbara	"	70	1	71
Tracy	"	210	3	213
Betty	"	140	2	142
Jenny	"	120	20	140
	machine shop			
Nora	final assembly	70	1	71
Brigitte	"	140	2	142
Madge	moulding shop	170	-	170
Carol	"	170	-	170
Bob (m)	"	170	-	170
Jim (m)	"	170	-	170
Sarah	press shop	72	8	80
Kathy	paint/plating/ stripping/EPS	200	80	280
Jill	supervision	125	-	125
20		3455	143	3598
Ernie	maintenance	-	30	30
Gordon	stores, warehouse	-	30	30
Terry	chargehands, setters	-	70	70
	quality control			
Michael	carpenters	-	33	33
John	tool room	-	30	30
5			193*	193
25		3455	336*(436)	3791*(3891)

\*Does not include a number of labourers and servicemen unaccounted for (b)

Total shop stewards 25 (18 women, 7 men) (c)

Representation:

- In areas where men predominate 1:38 (or 1:50 including 100 labourers)
- In areas where women predominate 1:180

Notes to the table

- (a) The figures are not the same as those given in Table 8 above because they are derived from different sources (mainly interviews with shop stewards).
- (b) At the time of the study, there was some dispute as to who represented the semi-skilled labourers and servicemen not already included within recognised constituencies. Gordon (storeman) had previously claimed to do so, but did no longer. In order to maintain his constituency at a 'viable' size (i.e. his own position as a shop steward) he 'laid claim' to the semi-skilled women working in inspection/quality control. Terry who had 'created' his constituency to include the skilled grades in inspection/quality control, also claimed to represent this group of women. Neither men, in practice, appeared to have had anything to do with them vis:
- (How many women are there in quality control?)  
"I'm never sure... because I've never caught them all together yet". Terry 11/S2:546
- (c) Not included is MP(f) who acted as the representative for workers on the evening shift covering the press shop, paint, plating, stripping and EPS. No figures were available for the size of this constituency.

### Conclusions

In this chapter we have identified a number of problems associated with the women workers and their trade union. There is the non-appearance of issues especially relevant to the female membership in the union's domestic organisation, and a lack of effect consequent upon them being raised. There is an apparent failure of women's needs to be properly addressed in collective bargaining and an unequal benefit for women in agreements. There is a shortage of women in most decision/policy making positions and the under-representation of all women workers in the representative system as a whole.

These can, perhaps, be reduced to two main problems to be explained. On the one hand, there is the women's seeming lack of ability and willingness to press their claims - their lack of bargaining strength. And on the union's side, there is an apparent lack of responsiveness to the women members' needs and interests. In what follows, we are mainly addressing the latter question. And we look first at two features of the union organisation which explains this: the dominance by the male membership and by the full-time officers. Clearly, we can suggest that there are likely to be connections between the women workers' perceptions of the organisation's reduced responsiveness to their needs and lesser effectiveness in progressing their demands, to their under-representation in the structure as a whole. And this can be seen to constitute some part of an explanation for the problems we have already begun to pose, illustrated in this chapter by the absenteeism and productivity agreements. Thus,

given the under-representation of women and the over-representation of men, we can surmise that in the first example, management's demands were likely to be all the more easily imposed; and in the second, the higher-paid men's interests were likely to be those that more readily predominated.

An investigation of the problem of representation in the organisational structure is generally, as far as most explanations of women's position in trade unions go. But it is apparent to us that the analysis cannot stop here, because to do so, is to present the structure of representation as given and, as a causal factor, independent - while it seems to us that it is neither. We would argue that the representational structure is itself negotiated and negotiable. It is patterned by bargaining relationships just as it also patterns them. And when we look at the bargaining process in more detail (chapter 14 & 15) we can see just how far this is the case.

If the pattern of representation also constitutes in itself, a problem requiring explanation - we need a framework adequate to explain this as well.

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(Why can't you go in while the members are on strike?)  
"If you negotiate so much as a 6p rise to get them  
back they'll be doing it every five minutes and no  
agreement would be worth the paper it was written on".  
Mary (Branch secretary) (86)

Just as the lack of responsiveness of trade union organisations to women workers needs and interests, tends to be explained by the dominance of men in the structure on the one hand and the weakness of the female membership on the other, without either of

those two features themselves being satisfactorily explained, so the lack of responsiveness of trade unions in general to (male and female) members' needs and demands - tends to be explained by the dominance of full-time officials and the weakness of the (fragmented) rank and file in relation to the bureaucracy in the organisational structure.

The matter of 'the institutional interest' underlying a differentiation of interest here, is of course central to any discussion of the responsiveness of representational structures as members are well aware! (87)

"...let's face it - Did you know that the union've have got shares in BSR?... Quite a lot. I found out 2 years ago - now how long they have been in... I tried to calculate it. I'm going back 5-6 years ago, we were all asked if we would like to buy shares in BSR - a block of them. Well, let's face it - nobody here could afford it! But I was surmising that the union, at the time - did go in then. But I think its wrong! That is why we haven't had any official strikes! THEIR interest see! But, it shouldn't be allowed, I don't care what you say - they're not breaking the law, I was told - because I questioned it. But I still say, no union, whether its the G.M.W. or any - should have shares in the factory where they've their union. I mean, they can have shares in another factory where they haven't got the union - but not in the factory where they've got members, I think its wrong".  
Jill (Final assembly, supervisor)(88)

The question of 'the institutional interest' is normally raised as problematic in the sense that it constitutes a division between 'the union bureaucracy' and 'the rank and file' and underpins a contradiction whereby the full-time union officer becomes 'a manager of discontents' - having to both respond to and contain 'the pressure from below'. At a more immediate level than the

need to maintain the viability of the firm, (or the value of the shares!), we would argue that this is governed by the need to protect the bargaining relationship on which the institution is (also) ultimately dependent. Thus we would maintain that to the extent that the viability of the union organisation is dependent upon the institution of collective bargaining - these are the 'institutional needs' which are determining in the first instance. Here, we must look, in order to discover what shapes organisational needs such that members' own representational structures - and the officials who operate within these - appear unresponsive and, at times, oppositional. And we need to examine more closely what underlies the continuous process of "undemocracy" within the organisation and the precarious balance of control - over or by ? - the membership.

It is notable that, in so far as discussions about the 'institutional interest' tend to remain within an intra - rather than inter-organisational framework, employers tend to have a somewhat shadowy presence.

"The union leader was continuously involved in establishing and re-establishing his credibility to his members. To achieve that more or less successfully, he had to engage in 'debate' with his members so as to bridge the gap between what he considered as achievable and desirable and what his members thought desirable".  
Lane (1974)p.249.

But the union leader has also, of course, to "engage in debate" - i.e. to negotiate conditions for the institution's credibility with the membership - with the employer as well. For example: what issues are to have negotiable status ("we know

very well the Company are not going to break that agreement" - referring to the movement of labour clause<sup>(89)</sup> the size of the "gap" (as in the quotation from Lane (1974) above); and the nature of the employers' own demands (i.e. the quid pro quo for agreement; "we've always said we would never ask for the extra there") (90). Most important of all, there is the necessity continuously, to negotiate with the employer, the institution's proprietary status in terms of the system of representation and the bargaining relationship itself. Whenever, for example, management allow or encourage the membership to by-pass procedure or the shop stewards, and treat with them directly, institutional control is threatened.

As an illustration of this, an interesting incident occurred when the Industrial Relations Director once allowed himself to be way-laid on entering a factory where the workforce was on strike. The union's regional secretary had heard about it by accident afterwards:

Jim Mason, Regional Secretary of the Union to Tony Stuart, Industrial Relations Director:

"You've walked into a factory and talked to members not shop stewards. You're not to do it again".

TS "I talked to a group including shop stewards".

JM "If shop stewards ask you to talk to members on the shop floor, you refer them to me".

G (top management) : "They're still our employees you know ! "

TS "Hang on! I realise the pitfalls of direct communication, and also the pitfalls of ignoring them. KA invited me to talk to members - is that wrong?"

PS (union full-time officer) "Yes. If there's going to be communication it should be by written documents and then communication should be with the union's representatives."

TS "I'm fully aware of our agreement, and I've no intention of breaking it". (91)

In extreme instances where the membership are in revolt against their union, the officials may well be driven to negotiate management's protection of their proprietorship against attempts by the workforce to introduce alternative bargaining channels. (92)

This proprietorship is won by the union in the first place in the initial negotiations for 'recognition'. The bargaining relationship itself, therefore, is also 'bargained' and in this sense the agreement contains the employer's terms which constitute 'costs' for the membership as well. (And in the next chapter we follow through some of the implications and consequences of the recognition agreement concluded between the Union and BSR). To the extent then, that the trade union organisation is experienced as unresponsive to the needs of the membership, this is usually perceived as a conflict between the (conservative) bureaucracy and the rank and file. The 'institutional interest' is seen as the crucial source of this division. (93) But we would argue that, to the extent that the workers' organisation is dependent upon collective bargaining, what constitutes the 'institutional interest' is, crucially, shaped by the employers - and 'institutional needs' are variable, being determined by the bargaining interests and relationships the organisation mediates. It is the opposed character of these that has consequences for the degree of responsiveness or democratic control in the representational structure. To a greater extent than the explanation it provides, the phenomenon of bureaucratic control in workers' organisations in general, and the dominance of officials at BSR in



particular - remains to be explained in terms of these other interests and relationships.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND THE DIFFERENTIATION OF INTERESTS  
BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND WORKFORCE.

"You see, the management - they're out for profits. And the union - they're out to help management make profits - and then have a share in them".  
Bob (Service man, Moulding Shop)(94)

(What are the benefits of unionisation for management?)

"The union is a sign of the times. In the old days Macdonald would have had you running here there and everywhere - and there would have been lots of unofficial strikes and he would sack the lot and eventually he'd have run out of labour. So in one way, the union has done a good thing, because they have some control over their members. Not much, but some".  
Bob (Moulding Shop Supervisor)(95)

(How would you feel about working for BSR without a union here?)

"I would think that the role of unions in the factory is for the benefit of management these days; as well as for the benefit of the employees. It would be desirable here, to HAVE a union in this factory - because of the sheer weight and the complexity of it. I would say it was more beneficial to the Company to have some sort of organisation than dealing with the problems haphazardly and hit and miss. I don't see its logical that you could run a labour force as large as this without an organisation on the employee's side to cooperate. The word I would always seek would be cooperation - I would never seek confrontation...

I don't think you could possibly run this factory with the amount of people, without having some sort of system. So I should say the system - even procedure you see, which is an elaborately built-up system - people are sometimes wary of it - sometimes they believe that its unwieldy, it doesn't work fast enough for them. But you see, the greatest thing you gain even then - it does protect them. So the fact is that a system is desirable, even to the point of being necessary"

Gordon (Storeman)(96) my emphasis l/c underlined  
original emphasis u/c underlined.

Both of these shop stewards expressed the benefits of unionisation to management in terms of increased control over the workforce. And implicit in this view, there was a general assumption that the workforce, in any case, would/should reap the benefit from this as well.

"I see it as our job - if there's problems, to point them out and try and get them improved. If its to the work's benefit, then its got to be to our benefit in the end - or we should make sure that it is. I mean if there's aggravation in various areas, its got to be the firm's benefit to try and solve it, hasn't it?"

Ernie (Maintenance, deputy convenor)(97)

To what extent can we assume that the employees' interests coincide with those of the employer at every level and without contradiction? Since few would claim this of the employment relationship, we need to explore a further highly significant aspect of interest differentiation in the bargaining relationship, and examine the way this is mediated through the structure and process of collective bargaining.

The management were out to make the profits. The union, by means of collective bargaining, sought to benefit from a share in them. But as we have pointed out, as part of this bargain, management's claims and demands are posed, negotiated and in some part accepted by representatives of the workforce as well. So one of the benefits to management of unionisation, can be seen to lie in this system whereby their needs and demands can be presented and 'agreed' by the workforce - in a form which may be all the more effective for being backed by a degree of commitment

that might otherwise have proved difficult to engender.

Thus we have posed collective bargaining as being a distributive process, whereby costs and benefits are shared between management and labour on the one hand, and between the ranks of labour on the other. And we have suggested that the distribution of these shares is governed by the balance of power in both sets of bargaining relationships - which is in both cases, unequal. We need to examine the substantial terms of agreements which will reflect this in order to establish more fully, the extent to which this is so, but even at this stage, we can suggest this point is illustrated in the outcome of the two agreements already discussed. The first reflected management's demands to a greater extent than the women workers' needs, and from the latter's point of view, it will be argued that the costs greatly out-weighed the benefits. The second agreement, reflected the male workers' demands to a greater extent than the women's.

In both cases, the union's full-time officials, who were the chief representatives in bargaining with management, played a significant role in maintaining the (unequal) pattern of distribution embodied in these agreements, the lines of which ran in two directions - between the employer and the workforce and within the workforce itself. There was a central position, mediating the complex balance of pressures in both sets of bargaining relationships. But it is clear that it was the greater power of the employer overall, which overwhelmingly determined the nature, extent and the pattern of their bargaining gains and, more importantly here, their concessions. And to the degree that the full-time negotiators were committed to upholding the bargaining relationship, they were

also committed to ensuring their members' compliance with the terms of the agreements. This, therefore, required on their part a relatively high degree of control over and within the representational structure. And this in turn was of course likely to diminish their responsiveness to (certain of) their membership's demands. (98)

"He seems like a management man".  
(Why in particular, does he seem like that?)  
"Well the shop stewards have stood up sometimes and they've said something and it seems to be for the worker. And yet he stands there and he'll say "Oh but..." you know. And what he's saying is a repeat of what the management have said. Its like he's standing up for them. I can't bear that".  
Barbara (Final Assembly) (99)

Clearly we are giving no credence here to conspiracy theories of complicity, or to subjective theories of bureaucratic incorporation. We are merely pointing out that in collective bargaining with the employers, trade union negotiators are not

"juggling two separate sets of interests: those of the union as an organisation, and those of the members who nominally gave the organisation its *raison d'être*".  
Lane (1974) p.243.

They are in fact, juggling with three.

We would argue that it was the balance of bargaining relationships (unequal) and the nature of the process of collective bargaining (distributive) which generated in the first instance, unresponsive structures within the representative institution. The more that bargains embody the employers' interest (as they always must to some degree) to be passed down to the workforce in exchange for benefits, the more grievances and demands are likely

to be generated - as these costs impinge on the shop floor - to be pushed back through the system again. To the extent that the negotiators have to remain committed to the terms of the agreements (as a term of the bargaining relationship) and to the extent that the employer can stipulate some kinds of issues as being less negotiable than others - demands and grievances are likely to be blocked, parried or "traded" within the representative system. This process of 'grievance bargaining' itself requires a relatively high degree of institutional control to be wielded over the representational structure. (100) And this as a result, is rendered more ineffective in relation to the membership in general, and, we would argue, certain groups within the membership in particular.

This view of the distributive aspects of collective bargaining on the one hand and the distribution of power in bargaining relationships on the other, provides us with an approach to many of the questions raised in this chapter. To the extent that the employers' interests were passed on through the bargaining process, the structures of representation and negotiation established as a result of unionisation would be rendered less responsive to the workforce in general and certain crucial sections - like the women in production in particular. And to the extent that the male workers were in a stronger bargaining position vis a vis management, the union officials and the women workers, they were able to dominate the structures of representation and negotiation, with the result again, from the women's point of view, that these structures would be rendered less responsive to their needs and interests.

In the chapters which follow, we use this approach to examine the position of the women in the workplace and in the union in more detail. We are particularly interested to explore the implications of these bargaining processes and relationships: What consequences flow there from? We have moreover, an important question which still remains to be addressed: what were the sources of this female membership's apparent lack of bargaining strength?

THE WOMEN WORKERS AND THEIR UNION

Footnotes

- (1) Ref BB 18/S2: 130
- (2) Ref MB 33/S3: 974
- (3) Ref EW 14/S2: 244
- (4) Ref JA 30/S4: 1-
- (5) Ref EW 14/S2: 224-290
- (6) Ref GH 23/S3: 979-end
- (7) Ref BM 9/S2: 132-140
- (8) Ref EW 14/S2: 224-290
- (9) Ref EW 19/S2: 979-999
- (10) Ref JA 43/S5: 150-167
- (11) Ref EW 21.
- (12) The GMWU rulebook stated that to be made official, strikes involving fewer than 300 members had to be sanctioned by the Regional Committee. Strikes involving a larger number of workers had to be sanctioned at national level.
- (13) In any case, until the procedure had been exhausted (7 stages up to ACAS) the stewards were forbidden to do so by the agreement (Clause 37); compliance with which by their membership, the steward was held personally responsible (Clause 12).
- (14) Ref MB 40/S4: 675-750
- (15) Clause 37 of the BSR Agreement, Appendix 1
- (16) Ref MB 33-34/S3: 974-5417
- (17) Ref KA 25-26/S2: 290-310
- (18) Ref JA 30-31/S4: 1-69
- (19) Ref JA 30-31/S4: 1-69
- (20) Ref MB 40/S4: 685
- (21) Ref NB 8/S1: 605
- (22) Ref JW 10/S2: 416-420
- (23) Ref PB 25/S4: 382-410
- (24) Ref PB 25/S4: 436 and 514
- (25) Ref PW 15/S2: 322-353

- (26) It is interesting to note how the balance of issues affecting male workers to those affecting females has changed over the period. From Insert (466) in 1973 it was 10:5; 1974, 11:5; 1975, 14:10; 1976, 9:10.
- (27) Ref BB 26/S2: 628-636
- (28) See, for instance, Spender (1980), Spender (1982) and Beale (1982).
- (29) Ref EW 19
- (30) Ref TM 19/S3: 354-361
- (31) If any major problems occurred, the officials would attend the meeting of shop stewards at individual factories as well.
- (32) Particularly in relation to smaller bodies, such as the branch committee. This had itself, been set up as a result of a proposal by the full-time officer to the branch meeting of 5.12.1973.
- (33) Ref SB 28/S3/253-321
- (34) Ref JA 42/S5: 60
- (35) Ref BB 12/S1: 689
- (36) Ref MB 39/S4: 570-584
- (37) Ref JW 12
- (38) Ref PW 45/S4: 418-430
- (39) The main subject of these negotiations seems to have been to establish a common practice where payments were made for movement onto different kinds of work. These varied between the factories. There was also the added complication of movement designated temporary or permanent. The question of selection - most crucial to the women workers, was deemed non-negotiable by management.
- Whatever the outcome, no changes in management's practice affecting all factories, were likely to have been concluded at negotiations below the level of Stage 5 ie. involving the union's full-time officers.
- (40) Ref MB 39/S4: 613-637
- (41) Ref EW 19/S2: 886-920
- (42) Ref LG 5-6/S1: 669-702
- (43) Ref BB 25/S2: 568
- (44) See Appendix 3 for a copy of the absenteeism agreement.
- (45) Ref JG 34/S2 & S3: 4-26: cont'd



"I was put on the spot. They said that this lady had got to come into our office. I said she'd only had two days - there was no way that I was going to take her into the office. And they said, that because the others had had to go in, that it was only fair that she should have done. So I said to her 'will you go in?' (I didn't tell her that she had to go in)'. I said 'will you go in?' - and the damn silly woman went in instead of saying - she hadn't got to go. But when he asked her if she would, she just volunteered and she just went, you know. And I could have kicked myself over that. Because I thought, if I could have had the opportunity, to have explained - to say that it wasn't necessary for her to have had that warning - she needn't have gone in."

(46) Ref JG 16/S1: 890-910 and 33/S2: 840-950

(47) Ref PW 22.2.1977/134

(48) Ref PW 21.2.1977/127

(49) "The absenteeism at Old Hill and Stourbridge was in a very poor state, costing both time and money to the company and its employees at these factories. So, therefore, THEY decided to change the rule governing ABSENTEEISM from three days in one month to two days in three weeks. However, absenteeism at Waterfall Lane was nothing like so troublesome and members of the 'Roband section' decided that they would not be forced to submit to disciplinary action because other members of the group were having trouble with sections of their workforce having days off. We decided to call a strike and short-lived though it was, it was felt and heard by the Union and management."

"Our case was taken to Branch and there was referred to Branch Committee. At no time were we governed by the new ruling, until it was dropped on us by the Branch Committee and we then found out that there was nothing that we could do about it, other than have another strike. While we were discussing this, our convenor at the time, Mr I.S. came and told us that there was nothing that we could do and don't cause bother as there is a Sickness Benefit Scheme in the pipeline and to assure the success of this scheme, would we put up with this new ruling on absenteeism for a trial period of three months, after that time we could revert back to the original ruling."

"Now we are told that the management want another two weeks to decide on the absentee rate and consider the Sickness Benefit Scheme. We have now had fourteen weeks under the new ruling. FOR WHAT?"

Emphases in original.

Source: Branch minutes 24.2.1977.

(50) At this meeting a motion was submitted asking about the joint shop stewards meetings.

"The question was raised as to why there had not been J.S.S. meetings every two months as agreed. Branch Secretary replied that providing that the meetings could be carried out in a responsible

manner, she would arrange a meeting for Monday 28th February, 1977. This meeting would be mainly to discuss the social contract and return to free collective bargaining."

Branch minutes, February 1977.

- (51) Ref PW 23.2.1977/147.
- (52) To reflect the shift premium. The male shift workers did not get the extra if it was paid as a bonus.
- (53) Ref SB 14/S2: 156-181
- (54) Ref JA 24/S3: 277-299
- (55) Ref EC viii/81: 494-510
- (56) Ref JA 42/S5: 77-88
- (57) "The Inbucon report, that was one thing I took home with me and I sat down and I tried to study it, you know. There were some things that didn't make sense. And it used to get on my nerves, you know. I used to think, well here they are again, trying to baffle us with science - AGAIN. I mean, we're all working class people, on the shop-floor, so why DO this sort of thing?! Why don't they do it in plain English, so that we can go back and say - here it is, written down in there. Instead, we've got to go back home and ... I pick my husband's brains sometimes - and try to sort it out to see what its all about."  
Edna (Final Assembly). Ref. 21/53:207-222
- (58) Ref EC vii/S1: 394
- (59) "A factory in South Wales would close down..... a factory in Leatherhead makes motors for fuel pumps in aeroplanes. And there's a Belfast factory which is practically rent-free, and we've just put in £150,000 of new plant (to make stainless steel tea-pots for Teasmade). With a 33% rebate from the government for machinery - we're very dependent on government subsidies there."  
(Industrial relations manager). 14.6.1978/414 (Emphasis in original)
- (60) Ref EC ix/S1: 530-535. Craftsmen comprised mainly maintenance and toolroom workers.
- (61) Ref MB 26/S3: 139-191
- (62) Ref 3/S1: 355-400
- (63) Ref MB 26/S3: 129-139
- (64) Ref NB 22/S3: 140-178
- (65) Ref EC ix/S1: 530-546
- (66) Ref SH 20/S2: 431-440
- (67) Ref NB 22/S3: 120-133

- (68) Ref NB 24/S3: 272-313
- (69) Ref EW 19/5 999-
- (70) The summer holidays were, for example, divided into two one week breaks around June/July and September.
- (71) Ref MC 23/S3: 163-206
- (72) Ref TM 27-28/S3: 990
- (73) Ref MC 7-8/S1: 520-590. See Michael quoted above p. 311  
"I married my wife to look after me, my children, my home...."
- (74) Ref GH 23/S3: 944-1000
- (75) See the motion tabled to the Branch by male workers at the Waterfall Lane factory concerning the absenteeism agreement in footnote (49) p.526 above.
- (76) Ref SB 6/S1: 401-499
- (77) Two thirds of the female shop stewards interviewed had never been on a training course - compared with half the male stewards.
- (78) Ref TM 24/S3: 604-650
- (79) Ref TM 18/S3: 301-310
- (80) Ref TM 19/S3: 320
- (81) Ref EC 12/S2: 1-10
- (82) Ref EC 27/S4: 300
- (83) Ref EC 13-14/S3: 40-65
- (84) "She was very nice - a lady, but the members crucified her. They knew they could push her and they did - for every little thing. She was on the 'phone to the office every few minutes. She was ill when she was convenor, and when there were serious disputes, she'd be passing out, and we'd have to carry her, physically. The men said - 'Look what we've got representing us.' They were very cruel."  
Mary (Branch Secretary) 25.1.1977/49.
- (85) By 1978, Old Hill again had a male convenor and in 1979, so did Stourbridge.
- (86) Ref PW 21.3. : 211
- (87) As pointed out by Lane (1974) p.228-9.
- The GMWU had significant investments in private companies throughout the 1960's which included share holding in non- (or more correctly anti-) union firms such as BSR and Rugby Portland Cement. The bulk of these were maintained until 1979, when they were sold to increase the liquidity in union funds preparatory for 'the winter of discontent' (1979-80).

In 1974 the company had tried to encourage their employees to buy shares and a question as to the advisability of this was raised at branch (15.8.1974). A letter signed by the General Secretary and read out to the membership stated that:

"the Union's policy is to discourage our members from buying shares in the company in which they work, since this might tend to involve them in a conflict of interest as trade unionists."

(88) Ref JA 48/S5: 486-520

(89) Ref PW 16.12.1976/7

(90) Referring to shift work premiums for women workers. PS 28.6.1977/385.

(91) Ref 21.3.1977/233

(92) "When it comes to the crucible of recognition or not for the insurgent group, the matter is one of life or death for the union far more than for management. Since collusion, as a rule, is the background of the insurgent's charges, the Union will use pressure on management to give in on any substantive matter, but not on its ownership of the bargaining unit."  
Herding (1972) p. 296 (My emphasis)

(93) As we have noted in our previous discussion concerning the differentiation of interests (between male and female workers Chapter 8), the effects of this are enhanced by various lines of separation in the experience of the various parties involved. As an example of this in relation to the full-time officials, we can note the comments of the branch administrative officer on the impact of the absenteeism agreement on the female membership:

"They've always had a warning system for unofficial absence. If they're away without good reason - like a sick-note, they get called into the office to explain and given a verbal warning.

It doesn't mean a thing at all. They never DO anything about it. The company virtually turns a blind-eye - they're very lenient really.

I can't understand these women who go up in the air, if they're called in and get a warning! They should be able to see it doesn't mean a thing. But they come running to us in a state!

The trouble is, the company doesn't do it all the time .... sometimes they decide they've nothing better to do - and they'll have a purge and call them all in. At other times they'll go for weeks - without doing anything."

Mary (Branch Secretary). 22.2.1977/1B5.

(94) Ref BM 9/S2: 120

(95) Ref BM 33/S4: 185-195

(96) Ref GH 22/S3: 810-904

(97) Ref Ec 37/S5: 61-89

- (98) Opinions about the union officials were not directly solicited. But some were offered and these confirm an impression that the women members in particular did not feel their chief negotiating officers were as responsive to their needs and interests as they expected them to be.

"We're always having problems with Paul Silver - he's never available. We wanted him down here - we demanded him down here last week and the management got hold of him but we didn't. The union couldn't - he always disappears when the union want him, but he's always available, for both press and management, he appears."

Of course they were always present at the branch:

"Mary West and Paul Silver, at branch - I could sit and listen to them for hours, you know, because they are knowledgable people; but ... they talk - they know what they're talking about, but not all us down on that floor know what they're talking about - and ... facts and figures and things like that. Of course they've got that being done for them anyway - and they understand: but not all of us understand."

"The officials - go all around the bush, and they're not saying anything really. I think they're just trying to confuse the women that have bothered to go."

Overall, the officials did not seem 'strong enough' either, "well, sometimes you feel they could put their foot down, and do a little bit more - could do with being a little bit stronger here, definitely could".

- (99) Ref BB 26/ : 672-679

- (100) "Private ownership of the grievance by the union organisation, (is) the necessary condition for grievance 'bargaining' of this kind".  
Herding (1972) p. 194.

CHAPTER 12      HANDLING PROBLEMS THROUGH THE UNION

What are the benefits to be derived from unionisation? What resources does the institution provide to enhance the power of the workforce vis a vis management? And how is the effectiveness of trade union organisation in relation to the problems of the membership on the shop-floor to be assessed? We begin this Chapter by looking at the utilisation of resources accruing from union organisation on the shopfloor in relation to the women workers' problems. Thus we examine the involvement of the full-time officials negotiating with top management in the higher levels of the procedure; we look at the involvement of the body of shop-stewards which constituted the 'domestic' organisation at factory level, and finally we take a broad view of the extent of involvement of individual shop stewards representing women members on the shopfloor. Overall, we find that the use of institutional resources is minimal. What happened to the problems and issues we have already identified as being so significant for the women workers?

When we follow up some of the specific problems identified in Part Two of this thesis: speed up, work intensification, disciplining and movement of labour we find these fell by the wayside at a very early stage. Why was the union machinery so ineffective? We analyse the procedural and substantive terms of the agreement by which the representational system was established and management's relationship to this as well. And we find that there are a number of features associated with shopfloor bargaining relationships which can be seen as having an impact on the ability and willingness of the female membership to press their grievances.

Using the institutions resources

In this section we are particularly interested in examining how the women workers' problems, identified in Part Two above, were dealt with via the grievance handling machinery which was instituted following recognition of the union by the Company for collective bargaining purposes. In attempting to make some kind of assessment of 'effectiveness', three different levels of grievance handling are explored. First, that which involved the union's full-time officers, second, that which involved the domestic organisation collectively i.e. the body of shop stewards meeting within each factory; and finally, the individual shop stewards - representing members on the shop floor. We begin with an outline of how grievances were handled.

THE PROCEDURE

The formal agreed procedure for handling problems and disputes is reproduced in Appendix 1. Problems arising from the shopfloor were handled by individual stewards with the assistance, if necessary, of the factory convenor. Once per month all the stewards in a factory held a meeting, and reported on any problems they were dealing with. If the next stage required the involvement of the factory manager the issue might be put on the agenda of the Joint Works Committee or else it might be taken up by the convenor personally.

If the issue could not be agreed at factory level i.e. 'domestically' (perhaps because it involved the workers of more than one factory -) it was reported to the branch secretary and a stage 5 meeting was arranged between the union's full-time officers - the regional official plus the branch secretary - and the industrial relations director, accompanied by another manager above or equivalent to top-factory level.

The final decision on all issues was taken by the Chairman, on whose behalf (and personal instructions) the industrial relations director was acting. If the issues could not be resolved in this way, or if the decision involved some change in company policy, the Chairman entered the negotiations himself. This was Stage 6, the final stage of procedure. (1)

#### THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE FULL-TIME OFFICERS

To what extent does the grievance procedure at the levels of stage 5 and 6 reflect the problems experienced by the women workers on the shopfloor? Table 10 records the subjects covered by negotiations at this level of procedure during the first six months of 1977. (2) These were meetings formally arranged, and can only serve as an approximate indication of the total space and attention accorded to these issues by officials and management at this level. They will, of course, have been discussed "informally" as well.

From the table, 39% (14 instances) of the 36 meetings recorded, concerned males and females in general; and half of these were on the subject of sick pay. 47% (17 instances) concerned the males alone: over a third of these (6 instances - and 17% overall) relating to skilled men specifically. Only 14% (5 instances) of the issues negotiated at this level concerned women workers in particular and two of these instances arose as a result of women workers striking. Since women constituted some 84% of the labour force, how is the under-representation of their problems at this level of negotiation, which is suggested here, to be explained? Does it, perhaps, reflect the fact that these grievances were less pressing? If it is not a measure of greater satisfaction with conditions, is it an expression of the women's higher degree of "apathy" in relation to the union?



Table 10 : The Operation of the Grievance Procedure

at Stage 5 and Stage 6

<u>Date</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Who (mainly or solely) affected</u>
28.1	S6	Staggered holidays	Skilled males
	S5	Eversure factory	Males
	S5	Guaranteed week	Males and females
		Sick & Benefit Scheme	Males and females
		5 mins on clock	Males and females
		Autoshop	Males
		Evening payment	Males and females
14.2	S6	Pensions	Males and females
15.2	S6 "Informal Chat"	Staggered holidays	Skilled males
		Sick scheme	Males and females
		Position of skilled men	Skilled males
		Fighting in factory	2 females
		Theft incident	Male
16.3	S5	Maintenance men SB	Skilled males
		Staff status - toolmakers	Skilled males
	S5	Upgrading setter(s)	Males
		"Informal discussion" - twilightshift	Females
18.3	S5 <u>Dispute</u>	"Bonus strike"	Males and female
29.3	S5	<del>Movement</del> of labour	Females
31.3	S5	Sick pay	Males and females
14.4	S5	Sick pay	Males and females
27.4	S5	Toolroom dispute	Skilled males
29.4	S5	Sick pay	Males and females
2.5	S5 <u>Dispute</u>	Sub-assembly (O.H): Movement of labour	Females
6.5	S5	Eversure	Males and females
12.5	S5	Subsistence	Males
		Loss of earnings (shift change)	Males
		Loss of earnings (result of toolroom dispute)	Females
		Pay negotiations	Males and females
19.5	S6	Sick pay	Males and females
28.6	S6	Sick pay	Males and females
30.6	S5	Night shift rules	Males
		Stacker truck pay	Male
		Downtime	Males
		Night shift pay	Males
		Regrading stores chargehand	Males

Source: Field notes and branch diary.

But what does this mean? Were the problems never raised as grievances by the membership or were they brought to the union and dealt with at lower levels of the procedure? In which case, were they 'lost' or 'won'? It is clear that we will have to look more closely at the level of the union's domestic organisation and factory level grievance handling machinery.

#### INVOLVEMENT OF SHOPSTEWARD ORGANISATION AT DOMESTIC LEVEL

The body of shopstewards in each factory attempted to hold one regular meeting every month at which individual representatives would report problems they were dealing with. Grievances which required further action would be placed on the agenda for the next stage. What kind of issues were brought up therefore, at this, the only regular meeting of all shop stewards in the factory at Stourbridge?

Three initial limitations concerning this meeting were mentioned by the stewards, which can be seen to have coloured its effectiveness. Firstly, although they were supposed to take place every month in work's time, management's permission had to be sought beforehand. In the event of any industrial action this was usually withheld. Secondly, the agenda of the joint works committee meeting, which came out of this meeting of shop stewards, was limited by this factory manager to seven items (all of which had to have exhausted procedure). Finally, there appeared to be a rule that any questions concerning pay could not be discussed.

Within these limitations, was the meeting a useful one - given that this was the only regular opportunity for all the stewards to discuss their problems together?

"...er, well, not really - 'cos the first thing they do is, 'Where's the cuppa teas - or coffees?' ....and it takes 10 minutes, 15 minutes to get that arranged - and you settle down to....your shopsteward business of the day- sort of thing.

And they read off the minutes of the last one, and decide what they're gonna leave in - you know, what's been satisfied, and what 'asn't... Then you go round to each individual shopsteward to see if they've got anything to bring up. Out of 25, you'd 'ave 20 passes. And 5....bring something up. Well, surely, with a firm like this, there's gotta be something for every shopsteward to bring...? (3)

Jill (supervisor - final assembly) (3)

Indeed, three of the women shopstewards at Stourbridge who were interviewed had never raised an issue at this meeting. What kind of issues were raised? Ernie, shop steward for the maintenance workers, was the Committee's Chairman:

"There's alot of petty matters raised - the size of teapots, big teapots or little teapots....it should be used for bigger things - working conditions and timing of jobs. But they tend to use it for petty things like toilets being cleaned...."

(Why do they?)

"P'raps its custom and practice - a mould they've got into...

Don't think I've got a thing against women...but I tend to find, you know - it's the girls as tend to bring up the petty things. Like I've spoken to one or two of the guys - shopstewards - there's about half a dozen of us I s'pose, and they seem to be concerned that it should be used for more serious things."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (4)

Asked about an issue he had raised at this meeting himself, Ernie's example concerned a car parking problem (unsatisfactorily resolved) outside the maintenance department. Overall, the most common problem brought up at the Stourbridge factory shopsteward's meeting concerned the ventilation and heating: "They're always bringing these (questions)...." Ernie) (5).

Although, as might be expected, wider problems were aired, the minutes confirm a predominant emphasis on small 'welfare' type questions. (6) Can this picture be taken as a realistic reflection of the kind of discussion which tended to take place at this meeting? Michael had been a shopsteward for six months - his constituency was totally male. Working

in the carpenter's shop he had never had much contact with the women workers nor awareness of their problems on the shopfloor. Attending the factory shopstewards' meeting now, a vast number had been brought to his notice.

(What are the main problems experienced by the women workers?)

"Hygiene at work. Cleanliness. Clean towels.  
Sufficient toilet facilities, soap etc."

Michael (carpenter) (7)

For movement of labour, discipline and domination, the pace and intensification of work, we are forced to look elsewhere. The problems we are interested in do not appear at this level of the organisational structure either. (8)

#### THE INVOLVEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL SHOPSTEWARDS

We must look therefore at the grievance handling of the individual shopstewards representing women workers in the plant in order to discover the outcome of problems and disputes they raised. Before examining specific issues as they were taken up, it might first be useful to make some overall assessment of the level of stewards' involvement in handling the women workers' problems. This is difficult without using techniques of close observation. But some indications can still be gathered from information reported in answer to such questions as: How much time did they spend on their duties as a shopsteward? Were they dealing with any problems currently? What were the most common problems they dealt with day to day? What did they consider to be their greatest achievement or success? And which were the easiest and which the hardest kinds of problems to deal with?

The picture that emerges is, of course, impressionistic. Two thirds of the stewards reported dealing with no problems currently. And the amount of time spent overall appeared to be low, although clearly it varied: "In a week, it might be nothing" (Janet)... "twenty

minutes this week" (in the office with a girl being disciplined) (Jenny)...  
"Once it took me all day to find out the reason for line 3 getting bad  
(low) performances - and the members on my line complained about me  
being off my job"....(Edna). (No stand-in was generally provided).  
Most of the stewards reported that their duties took up very little of  
their time at work. Edna had even noticed a reduction in the amount of  
time spent dealing with her members' problems:

"Some weeks I don't do anything at all. As a  
matter of fact it's getting less and less. Even  
since I've become a shopsteward it's getting very low.  
(Is that the same for other shopstewards?)  
I know one person...she's got 2 lines as well -  
and I think her problems get less and less as well."  
Edna (final assembly) (9)

Was the small amount of time taken up because the members had few  
problems to bring? This can hardly have been the case. Much of the  
evidence presented in Part Two of this thesis, setting out the problems  
of the women workers, has been drawn along with numerous illustrations  
and examples, from the women stewards' own accounts. Indeed, when asked  
about the problems which did come up most often for them, the picture was  
confirmed: movement of labour, disciplinary proceedings, job values and  
performances (especially related, on the assembly lines, to bad parts)  
and ventilation. Only one steward mentioned an issue different to  
these. (10) It would seem, therefore, that either these problems  
came up very infrequently or else the issues dealt with by the shop  
stewards representing the women workers were processed relatively  
quickly. Either way, the question then is, with what result?  
What were the shop stewards' successes?

When asked what they considered to be their greatest achieve-  
ments, over half of the shopstewards mentioned environmental improve-  
ments to working conditions. None of these improvements were won  
without a struggle. Although it might also be argued that in several

instances the company was bound to act under the Health and Safety at Work legislation. (11) Only two of the stewards mentioned a movement of labour/absenteeism/disciplinary problem. One who was involved in setting up a rota and one who prevented a girl who was late, being moved off her job as a "punishment". None mentioned gaining improvements in job values or performances. Perhaps it is the case that an improvement which is concrete and visible is more likely to stand out in the memory. On the other hand, it may also be the case that some issues are more readily negotiable. Were some problems easier to deal with than others?

From the stewards' replies it would appear that alteration to working conditions was one of the easier problems to take up: "Mind you, they'll see you - but they'll please themselves when they get it done." Going into the office with people being disciplined for absenteeism was also put into this category of "the easier type" of problem, as was: dealing with mistakes (for example, in pay) and taking up cases of unusual individual misfortune.

The most difficult issues were all those to do with the organisation and pace of production and, of course, pay; i.e. movement of labour, bad parts, performance ratings and job values. Which are the hardest problems to do something about?)

"The dissatisfaction that they get, you know - working on a job where they can't get any money - make any money. They come to me and they say, there's something wrong with the job - it hasn't been timed right. Now there's no way that they'll come back and retime it - to the satisfaction of the members or me."

Sally (subassembly) (12)

(Which problem has been with you the longest?)

"Timing the Tetrad plugs. Each time - it's been taken through procedure...and they've moved the girls around - then I was moved to a different section. Hazel had the last dealing with it.

They finally put the job out to sub-contract (for a while). We've tried to get this job retimed for two years and it still hasn't been done. Well, they retime it - but only to put more on the count."

Pip (subassembly) (13)

To sum up, working conditions and personal issues were considered much easier to deal with than production ones. And anything which had to be taken up through procedure was more difficult to win than the type of problem which could be resolved straight away i.e. in discussion with the superintendant on the shopfloor.

The question which remains to be explained is that by the stewards' own accounts and the researcher's observation, the women workers at BSR daily experienced pressing problems which they attempted to respond to using the resources available. Chief among these was the system of representation and procedure established as a result of unionisation. But an examination of the grievance handling machinery from top to bottom reveals little trace of the problems which have been identified. What happened to them? If one were to adopt an institutional approach, it might be argued that their 'non-appearance' is an empirical reflection of their lack of significance for the membership. And therefore, due assessment of the importance of these problems offered in Part Two above is vastly overdrawn. Certainly, if the institutional arrangements had been taken as a starting point for the research, the organisation of production and employment relationships, as they affected the women workers at BSR would not have appeared as a problem in the first place. It is part of the project of this research however, to demonstrate the weakness of an empirical perspective which assumes, because it takes as its starting point, the unproblematic nature of institutions. And rather than taking the 'institution's' definition of a problem's existence

or significance, we will show, on the contrary, how this definition is, in fact, constructed. And this very process of construction is problematic.

It has already been suggested that the shopstewards found some questions were more difficult to resolve than others. And since those concerning the organisation of production remain of particular interest to us, we turn now to look at some of these cases in detail.

What happened to the issues?

Since the problems we are interested in seem elusive when we focus on the grievance handling machinery, we need to start perhaps with the problems themselves. Here we pick up on a number of examples, all of which have been raised in the earlier part of this thesis, and follow them through. We begin with three problems of speed-up, one in the paint shop (continuous process plant), the second in the moulding shop (individual, automatic machines) and the third in subassembly involving team workers. The first two issues perished after inertia and delay in the higher levels of procedure and the third management won outright. We take up the problem of intensification by looking at what happened when stewards took up the problem of bad parts in final assembly. The problem continuously recurs because it is never taken up at the level where it might be resolved. In three examples of stewards in assembly sections involved in representing members being disciplined for poor performance, we find no defence is, in fact, offered. And finally, we look at three problems associated with movement of labour; 'unnecessary' movement, the 'no transfer' rule and movement resulting in loss of pay. We find that the first two scarcely have the status of a grievance as far as the shopstewards are concerned, while the third did have, and stewards were prepared to negotiate on the issue - only to find that the members often were not.



#### SPEED-UP

In Chapter 4 above, we looked at the problems of speed-up and the intensification of labour. Here we examine what happened when these issues were taken up through the union machinery.

When the track in the paint shop was speeded up, the women complained to Kathy:

"So I went to see Pearl the convenor but she did nothing. Then the women forgot all about it, and that was it. It did slow down sometime back, - it just, suddenly went - and started going slower again. But after, they've speeded it up again....but the women aren't bothering now. It's back to the faster speed now."

(Do you think Pearl should have done something about it?)

"Yes. Because - I asked for the count.... asked for what had been done the week before the track had been speeded up. So Pearl said 'go and get the count then, and I'll come back to you'. But she never bothered, she never came back."

(And then....)

"it was difficult to tell anything from the count. Some days we'd passed 13,000, another day 18,000 - they only count the ones we pass. So....now the women have got used to it...we can work at that speed now, so they're not bothering about it."

Kathy (Paintshop) (14)

Madge had tried to tackle speed-up in the moulding shop. This was difficult when it was done on individual machines, especially with the constant change of personnel, working four-hourly shifts. So when a large number were affected at the same time, Madge thought it a good time to act:

"Well - I went to Pearl in the finish with the problem, it still didn't get fought though. I had actually - I admit to it, and they knew that it happened - I said, 'pass the word from shift to shift, when they put it up again', (and they've done it another twice). I said, 'Don't

do it. Don't turn it out. Tell them on the other shifts, and all stick together and we can fight it. If we all stick together we can get something done'. I mean, OK, it was possible to keep getting those counts out, but they were exhausting the women doing it.

Actually, there should be a way of going back over the cards, over the years and seeing what the performances were and what they are now. But Pearl's never had the time to go through it with me. I mean, I asked her to when we had these women with the counts and we really thought we could have won that with 60 or 70 women. If we couldn't win in that case.... so really, we're fighting a losing battle on the individual machines."

(Could you do that?)

"Oh yes, if I'd got the cards, I could do it easily. But whether they would give us the cards....and the women could tell you....But we could never get anything done about it.

Well I thought we should have been able to do something. Because to my way of thinking, there's no way they should put the counts up like that...But because I didn't know how to do it - I really think the convenor ought to have found a way. But she was involved in so many other things, it never ever got done. If it came up again, I think I would insist on it being done. But it's coming up on a number that you can fight on. Individual ones - you can win the odd one and lose the odd one, you know we really need some more information about it all."

Madge (Moulding Shop)(15)

In these two instances, where speed up was disputed through the union, the issues 'perished' as a result of inertia and delay after being taken into higher levels of procedure. In another of the disputes quoted in Chapter 4 above, concerning two new lines in the sub-assembly area - one with a manual and one with an automatic press - management won. The shopsteward opposed the ratefixer's suggestion that they be given the same timing. She wanted the count for the younger girls using the manual press, dropped - "by about 10 - that'll please them, because really they'll still have to work harder than the older ones." (Pru) (16) But the

women working with the automatic press wanted to prove their line was the slower. The foreman swapped the two teams, putting each onto the other's line. Set in competition, each tried to prove the set-up they were now on was the quickest. By dint of special effort, the more experienced women managed to get a count out of the line with the manual press equivalent to what they had been doing using the automatic one - thus proving management's case. The shopsteward failed to oppose the move. (17) Her only suggestion had been, 'that they do week about....that's where the union comes in.' (Prw) (18).

#### INTENSIFICATION - BAD PARTS

On the two final assembly lines so many circumstances might affect the worker's pay that the main job of the steward was, in the first instance, to find out why the line's performance figures were lower than either the count might have suggested or the girls expected. And, since one of the main reasons behind final assembly line workers getting less money for the same or (often more) work, was the supply of bad parts (See Chapter 4 above), this was one of the most common problems taken up by their shopstewards. To what effect?

If a particular component could be identified, the stewards might succeed in persuading management to stop sending them to the lines. Even supervisors used this channel sometimes. When Jenny took up the case of the faulty switchboxes, it was the supervisor who had sent the girls to see her, after they had struggled to fit them all day:

"They'd been down to quality control and they'd put grease on them and filed them and they still couldn't get them in. (Finally) she told them to come through the union because the union will carry more weight with the management"

Joan (final assembly) (19)

But these successes, when they occurred, were short-lived. All the assembly line stewards agreed - this was a problem which was never resolved:

"You keep moaning and moaning and nothing seems... it's alright for the first few days and then it's all back to square one again."

Edna (final assembly) (20)

(Have you ever raised an issue at the factory shopsteward's meeting?)

"Well, only like the bad parts and things like that on the line. But they haven't been dealt with. They always come again. They're OK for a couple of weeks, you know, after you've jumped up someone's back. But then - Oh, just a few weeks - it's gone again, you know."

Barbara (Final assembly) (21)

#### DISCIPLINING - 'POOR PERFORMANCE'

If bad parts were a problem they felt they could never resolve. disciplining for 'poor performance' was one many stewards clearly considered they could do nothing about, even in the first instance.

It will be remembered that management used disciplinary action in order to enforce the level of effort they required. When the woman who had worked on crystals for 10 years was pulled into the office for poor performance, Janet was horrified. They'd never insisted on a count in that department, all they wanted was "good ones". But her only action was to advise the member that if they now wanted quantity instead of quality - then the woman should try to give it them.

On the final assembly lines Jenny was called in when a young girl was disciplined for working inconsistently:

"She'll work the one hour and she'll get them on. And then the next hour she just doesn't bother....(so the count drops)"  
(And what do you do when you're called in?)

"Well, I just have to go and witness the fact that she's had a warning for not doing the job. And there isn't anything else...All I can do is advise her to do her job."

Jenny (final assembly) (22)

Again:

"I was called in on a warning for bad inspection - which, of course, there is very little you can do...But this one girl really, had only been on the job 3 weeks, and she'd been taught, but she ought to have had a person with her all the time."

(Did she get the warning?)

"She got off fairly lightly. (But) she was warned, yes."

Pearl (sub-assembly convenor) (23)

#### MOVEMENT OF LABOUR

Movement of labour caused a lot of problems for the membership and, of course, for the shopstewards. A key issue was job security. This was constantly undermined because management could move workers onto jobs but did not allow transfers away from them. (Thus, they rarely had to sack workers, obligingly, they "sacked themselves".)

For the stewards therefore an important problem was to prevent workers being moved "unnecessarily", another was to ensure, when moves were made, there was no detriment attached and, finally, if a job proved unsatisfactory, that workers' requests for transfer received proper consideration. They were remarkably unsuccessful in practically every respect, especially in relation to the first and the last of these.

(Have you had people in difficulties with the job they've been put on?)

"Many a time....take the leads section. People used to stripping rubber mats - and they come to try and thread a tiny cotton through a little bead - because that's what it's like."

(Can you help?)

"No, they're forced to leave, again, that's through movement of labour."

(Can't they be transferred somewhere else?)

"No, because they say there's nowhere else they can put them. And yet they'll employ other people and put them on.

There again, there's a lot of people won't go on the lines....Smith turns round and says 'Well if we can move one, they'll all be wanting to be moved - which is what you would get'"

Pip (sub assembly) (24) Emphasis in original

Two instances were cited where stewards had been successful.

In one, the girls had downed tools because a person was moved as a disciplinary measure (for absence) and another girl, the supervisor's friend, was not. (Nora(25).) In the other case, Sally had taken action on her own initiative entirely:

"Sometimes there are cases, say where a woman is PHYSICALLY UNABLE to do a job, you know. Such as a woman - they put her on the cartridge section, and she had this thyroid problem, and it affected her eyes, and her eyes were literally... you know, they'd been operated on, and they were literally stitched together - and the one eye was literally stitched, and the other one was open, and she wore dark glasses, and...she was in a terrible state! And no WAY could she do cartridges, but they expected her to sit there and do it, you know. (very fine work using a microscope) And I just saw red! And I went across and fetched all her stuff off her, you know - all the stuff away from her. I said, 'You can't see it....you can't do it!' So they fetched her off the job, and put her on a job with a little press - that she can do, and now her eyes are much better - but they haven't put her back on."

Sally (sub assembly) (26)  
emphasis in original.

These somewhat extreme instances apart it seems that - however much the stewards deplored it - movement of labour as such, was not taken up as a grievance.

"I'd got one lady worked fifteen years on the tables, doing nothing else. She was in her late fifties. And they moved her onto the lines and she left within three weeks. I did mention this to Mr. Smith at one of the meetings upstairs. I said, that was NOT the way to repay loyalty. And he said, 'Had I known about it, it wouldn't have happened.' But it happens all the time!

(on another occasion) six women had a quarter of an hour's notice of moving into the next department - no time to dispute it or anything. Because when you come in the next day, all their cards and everything have been transferred to the next department - so it's nothing to do with your superintendant - and you can't fight it. You're not a steward on the lines, so you can't go in there and fight it for them."

Emphasis in original Madge (Moulding shop) (27)

Occasionally, the members tried to fight it for themselves:

"A pick-up arms section stopped work because they were being moved into the lines downstairs - 'cos you get a few, you get groups of people that'll stick up for one another...."

(Did they succeed?)

"Of course, they didn't, because it's mobility of labour. They just had to do it. They just had to do it, that's all. They just started work again and they felt, 'poor us', but nothing could be done, so...

(Did you have to tell them?)

"I had to tell them it was movement of labour, and had to try and convince them that they might like it better...."

Pip (sub assembly) (28)

When Sharon refused to go back into the paintshop and Kathy went to see management about it:

"they explained to me why and I explained to Sharon, you know. And she went back in for a couple of days. But she had thought they were taking her off main-plates and trying to put her back on hand-spraying - which she didn't like.

But you've got some people who try to make it worse for them. 'Cos they kept saying, 'Oh

you stick to your ground Sharon, don't you do it.' And they couldn't understand really that she was going to get the sack." (She would have would she?)

"Yes"

(Why?)

"Well that's the way it is here - you can be sacked for refusing to do a job."

Kathy (Paintshop) (29)

Thus Pru considered it was more in her members' interest to advise co-operation:

"It's better not to play up - or else they get spiteful. I say - 'Well do it today, and you won't do it tomorrow. If you don't do it today, you will have to do it tomorrow and the next day....'" (30)

This does not mean that the stewards did nothing to regulate some of the effects of movement of labour. They did attempt to ensure it was done 'fairly' - that is, to regulate management's power of selection, to some extent, and to prevent victimisation.

"I maybe get one every two or three weeks. A girl decides she's tired of being moved and sends for me. They object to being picked on and I say movement of labour doesn't mean the same person every time."

Lorna (final assembly) (31)

And both Lorna and Pru explained how they tried to forstall these problems by keeping their eyes open and warning the supervisors of possible problems if they saw someone being moved too often. But as with the problem of management disciplining the membership, the approach of the stewards to workers being moved in the first place was very much one of 'there's nothing we can do about it'. And workers' or stewards' requests for transfers were simply not entertained.



If we look at the second aspect of movement of labour mentioned above - that of ensuring, when moves were made, this was at no detriment to the worker, different problems arise. There was in each factory some kind of custom and practice agreement regarding the possible loss of earnings due to workers changing jobs. There were many problems, however, because the terms were vague, differed between factories (and, it would seem, within them); and they were unevenly enforced. On the other hand, if the steward was inclined, or pushed to do so, there was often some scope for negotiation here.

The company had agreed to pay average earnings for one month to any worker given a 'permanent' move. This could be avoided by deeming most moves 'temporary', whereupon the worker was paid the value of the job (if it was fixed) or what she 'earned' if it was 'piecework' - usually the lowest day-rate because they lacked the speed to achieve the output required. In the latter case, a shop-steward might negotiate a better payment on the grounds that the operator was putting in sufficient effort to deserve it:

"I had two cases yesterday....and I got a 75 performance for two members and I got a 70 for one. But they were going to pay them 66. And they were doing jobs alien to them, you know what I mean?"

Sally (sub assembly) (32)

But the amount the steward could achieve was, of course, related to how far the members were prepared to push:

"The one was getting the same as the job that she always does. The other two...they told me they were satisfied. I was a bit upset about the one particularly, because she gets a 99 performance, and they boosted it up from 66 to 75, you know. And she said, 'Don't bother,' you know, 'I'm happy'. So, you can't really force their arm up their back, can you?! And the other one, she normally got a 75, and they

gave her a 66 - and then they took the paper back, and...I told her to, you know, ask for more, and he came back with 70. And she came to me, she said, 'I'm satisfied' - well, I could have gone up, p'raps, and got 75 for her."

Sally (sub assembly) (33)

On fixed performance jobs there was no scope for negotiation in terms of effort. Pip had tried to get the women on her section to refuse to do jobs like sweeping up - a problem at the moment for three of them:

"They had been getting 86 performance on their job. Instead of asking if it would affect their pay, they got the brooms and swept up....they should get someone to do it - we've argued with Smith about it before... but, of course, they still do it. And when they drop their pay - they soon moan don't they? Their pay was dropped to a 76 performance and the case is still going on now. Pearl has been brought in...."

Pip (sub assembly) (34)

In these instances, although the shopstewards had attempted to establish or maintain protections against loss of earnings, little was achieved because the membership were not prepared to follow it through. This issue is taken up in more detail below.

The cases presented above cover those areas of most crucial importance to the women workers at BSR - speed-up and intensification of labour, discipline and movement of labour. All of these relate to the need for establishing controls over earnings and effort on the shopfloor. But the union machinery appears to have been an ineffective means for doing so. Summarising: some issues (like the two instances of speed-up) perished as a result of inertia and delay after being taken into higher levels of procedure. Others, (such as bad parts) were taken up continuously by stewards - only to

reappear just as continuously because they were never resolved at source. Then again, issues (such as loss of earnings through movement of labour) might be taken up by the stewards only to fail, or be resolved inadequately, because the membership accepted a detrimental compromise. On the other hand, these were also problems, such as disciplining workers for poor performance, or management instituting movement of labour which were not even contested by the stewards in the first instance. And an example of the way these aspects were linked could be seen in the case of speed-up - which was lost because management were allowed to use effective tactics (involving movement of labour) in order to win it. And finally, there were issues (which as getting transfers) on which management refused to negotiate or receive petition, and the shop stewards, therefore, consistently failed to make headway on behalf of the membership.

How are examples such as these to be analysed? What underlies the effectiveness or otherwise of shopstewards in their handling of the members' grievances? Three aspects can be singled out for attention here. And, although it is clear that they affect each other, they are identified separately at this point. First there is the behaviour of management to be considered. Secondly, there are the procedural and substantive terms of the agreement entered into by the union. Finally, we need to identify, in relation to both of these, what kind of impact they had on the bargaining strength of individuals and groups of workers - their ability and their preparedness - to press their grievances.

Management and the shopstewards' grievance handling

The first aspect to consider when assessing the effectiveness of shopfloor union organisation in general and stewards' grievance handling in particular - is the weight and flow of problems which arise from the implementation of management's production strategy, and secondly, the scope for and degree of concession offered to the shopstewards in relation to these. Both of these have consequences for the way grievances are pursued by members and stewards, as is illustrated in the following examples:

"There was a problem with a job that they retimed - and no way would we accept it, so we threw it into dispute. And they were getting a 75 for it - and they are still getting a 75 for it, and it's been about 6 months, you know. He won't give them any more, he says that this level should be done, kind of thing - he's got all his slide-rules and his calculator and....The women say, 'No way can we do it', so we've just thrown it into dispute, and it's up to them now, as to whether they get a 75 and they work to a 75. They get a 75....if he got his timing in, they'd get about a 69, some thing like that, you know. And yet they say that a job has to be "proved" to be....for an 80 performance, but there's no way they do though." Sally (sub assembly) (35)

As this, and a number of similar instances show, there was a strong sense in which the workers had to 'run in order to stand still.' Far from being in a position to improve their situation, management's production strategy produced such a weight and flow of problems that it became exhausting simply to maintain the status quo. A minimum level of 'tolerance' established by workers under these circumstances, meant that a significant number of issues remained, frustratingly, uncontested.

"There was one particular job that the women were getting, I think it was about 120 performance - and along comes work study, changed the method - now they're getting an 80. But here, once again is where I blow me top - not at management, but at the women!"  
Sally (sub assembly) (36)

Of course, this minimum level of tolerance established by the workforce depended on other circumstances as well. One important one being, the possibilities of success - if a grievance was to be pursued. A combination of management's conscious strategy to limit concessions to the shopfloor and market circumstances which inhibited their scope to do so, set strict limits on what could be gained. The membership's assessment of its own strength had continuously to be re-evaluated. In this example, the steward describes the effects of failure:

"I had a woman on the line with 8 years service. She collapsed when she got home and she was rushed to hospital and had a big operation - stomach removed and plastic tubing put inside her....She was away about 6 months....came back eventually with a note from her doctor saying she could only do light work."

The personnel officer was away and the person standing in, who knew nothing about the case, told the woman she would have to go back on the main line. Soon the supervisor came to Nora and said the woman should not be working on the line - the doctor had told her that if she wrenched herself it could be fatal. Nora felt the supervisor should take this up with personnel - it was management's responsibility - but she would not do this. So Nora went herself, and it was suggested the woman should be found a light job until the personnel officer came back on Monday.

"Well on the Monday, the woman's ordered back to work on the line again...and she came in tears....so we both went to personnel - who said there was nothing she could do. They hadn't got a job. I said, 'You can't tell me that in this factory, there isn't a little job SOMEWHERE you can find for this lady.' No! They wouldn't budge...."

The woman went back on the line and couldn't do her job. She started crying again. Nora took her to the nurse and explained the situation. She asked if the woman could be checked by the work's doctor:

"The nurse said, if she's not strong enough to do her job she shouldn't come to work.... (She's at bloody work though!) She said there was nothing she could do. So back I went to personnel and I argued....No. They wouldn't budge....I told the woman to get a passout and go home...She was crying again."

After work Nora talked over the case with her husband, and the next day she passed on his advice:

"I said, 'I'm only telling you because I've discussed this case with my husband - and he's a very strong union man - and he's told me to tell you to file in a complaint right away, for unfair dismissal. You've been forced out of your job.' And I sent her up to union (branch) office. I told it to personnel too - in the hopes they would change their mind - but they didn't....."

About a week later, one of the girls saw her up in Brierly Hill. 'Oh,' she says, 'I've had a lovely letter from the BSR,' she says - 'and Mr. Smith says, that he didn't know anything ABOUT it, and there's a job up in the cartridge pen from 9.30 - 3.30....' I ASKED SIX TIMES UPSTAIRS, TO LET HER INTO THE CARTRIDGE PEN. THEY FLATLY DENIED-AND FLATLY REFUSED IT.

And, of course, when you go back and you tell the women on the line 'NOTHING!' You get nothing. And they say, 'No bloody good that union is. We'm paying our money for nothing' which, I s'pose in a way is RIGHT isn't it? I mean they ARE aren't they? I mean, she's been paying it for 8 years and there wasn't a thing as could be done! And

then after - to send her a 'lovely letter'  
like that and say 'he didn't know anything  
about' the case.....!"

Nora (final assembly) (37)

In Nora's opinion the officials had taken this individual's problem up as a special case, and sorted it out with management - although she was never informed about this. What mattered, in the end, was that, once again the union organisation on the shopfloor was shown to be totally ineffective.

These aspects of managerial policy: the nature, weight and flow of problems arising from their production strategy, together with the tightly constrained limits of concession in their bargaining policy where the women workers were concerned, had obvious consequences for the scope and effectiveness of shopstewards' grievance handling and their members' confidence and preparedness to take up the issues. Naturally, if we are attempting to assess the strength or effectiveness of any particular group - like the women workers in comparison with the men - we need also to have some measure of the amount of pressure which is required in order to be effective i.e. the 'slope' of the bargaining relationship, as well as a measure of the bargaining strength and resources they have at their disposal. In the earlier part of this thesis and again here, we are proposing the context of management's production and bargaining strategy is crucial in respect of the first of these - i.e. the degree of pressure required. At the end of this Chapter, we return to examine its relevance for the second - the extent of the workers' bargaining resources.

The collective bargaining agreement : Procedural and Substantive terms

Clearly, the ability of the shopstewards to extract concessions and curb the exercise of management's power on the shopfloor is itself a factor determining how much managers are prepared to concede, and also in limiting from the outset the weight and flow of problems having a significant impact on the membership. In this section the effect of the basic union management agreement on the process of grievance handling is examined from the point of view of the shopstewards who, as representatives of the union as well as the membership, were responsible for ensuring adherence to the agreed terms. These terms constituted the basis of the company/union bargaining relationship and had both procedural and substantive aspects. Both structured the representational/negotiating activity of the shopstewards - indirectly through the impact on the membership as well as directly.

SUBSTANTIVE ASPECTS : THE MOVEMENT OF LABOUR CLAUSE

25. Both the Company and the Union subscribe to a policy of increasing production and operating efficiency. To achieve this end the Company will be free to introduce method improvements and new equipment but will consult with the Union as regards payment to be made to employees arising therefrom, and to decide whether or not work should be done within or sub-contracted outside the factory. Due to the large number of female employees and the type of work carried out in the factories, the work force has to be balanced in all sections each morning. The Union recognises that flexibility, interchangeability and mobility of labour within the factory are essential for its prosperity and to ensure continuity of production.



When the women assembling the pick-up arms were told to disband and go to work on the final assembly lines they stopped work in protest. When their shopsteward pointed out 'I had to tell them it was movement of labour, and had to try and convince them that they might like it better....' (Pip) (38) she was complying with clause 12 of the agreement.

12. The names and locations of Shop Representatives shall be notified in writing by the Union to the Company, who shall acknowledge receipt of the notification. Each Shop Representative must undertake to accept responsibility for carrying out his or her duties in accordance with the principles and procedures defined in the Agreement and shall accept personal responsibility for ensuring to the best of his or her ability that his or her constituents comply with the Agreement.

This evident conflict of interest caused problems for both members and shop stewards. Jill, who was a shopsteward and also a supervisor, discussed this in relation to doubling-up, an activity her own members (supervisors) had to initiate although she could see herself that it was something the operators should dispute through their own representatives. But it was not a problem the representatives could take up as a grievance:

"Now that (doubling-up) is a problem they should take up - but they prefer to take up wage queries. I mean, the supervision, they're employees as well. They are told to tell the girls to double-up. Now as far as they are concerned, they are doing their job by tellin' 'em to double-up. But it is up to the union reps - well, the girls first - to ask for the shopsteward....But....the shopstewards never encourage the girls to come to them with that complaint anyway. They 'ave brain-washed 'em into saying 'Mobility Of Labour! You're here to do a job! And if they can find you - whatever job it is - doublin'-up, sweepin' up - you do it!' Well, it's wrong! But the shopstewards 'ave drilled that into the members - and the members do not go to the union about it. (The shopstewards have actually told them that?) Oh, the mobility of labour - you're here to do a job - if the management can find you a job, you've got to do it. (Why do they tell them that?)

"Because it's an easy way out by sayin'....and it causes no problems by sayin': 'Mobility Of Labour Document'."

Jill (supervisor - final assembly) (39)

One of the most important consequences, in terms of shopfloor union organisation and grievance machinery was that the membership did not bother to use it. Edna could see that movement of labour was one of the most serious problems affecting her membership - but they did not come to her with their grievances, nor for support if they were disciplined for making a stand themselves:

"Cases like being moved on the line all the time. Well, we have got a movement of labour policy, but there's being moved and being picked on - to keep being moved all the time. And so - they say, 'Well, I'll have to go in the end, so I may as well go now. If I've got to go all through all that....', you know, so they go. Well, if the supervisor says to them to call me in - or what, I don't know. But I can't interfere - there's been quite a few of those.... " (What disciplinary cases do you deal with?)  
"There again: I hear about things, but they don't get to me. Like - if supervisors ask someone to move and they refuse - they're took in the office. When they come out, they sort of seem to move, so whatever's said to them - they can't ask for me, because otherwise... I've said to them, you should ask for me! Say you want your shopsteward in - but they never seem to come back for me so...."

Edna (final assembly) (40)

The agreement, therefore, was one reason why, although the problems of the membership were legion, the grievance load of the shopstewards was light.

"....at the moment, I think union 'ave put it over to the members - wrongly, I think so - about the mobility of labour. And they think, 'I've GOT to do it.' And I think also, they think 'Well, if I refuse, what's the union gonna do? I'm gonna land up doin' it anyway'. And that is the feelin' on the shopfloor - and they rarely go to union."

Jill (final assembly supervisor) (41)

There were wider consequences than this however. Pip was particularly incensed by the way movement of labour was always justified in terms of the workers' absenteeism. When it was clearly the most important part of management's overall production strategy, the effect of this persistent 'reasoning' (that it was their own fault) was to disarm much of the membership's protest. They also remained alienated from the union:

"The members don't think the union's doing enough." (What do they want the union to do?)  
"They're really angry about the movement of labour. Twelve months ago, we had a strike at Old Hill over it...Because, we think it's wrong of Paul Silver and Mary - well it's Paul Silver actually....to do with this book (The Blue Book agreement)"

(What happened with the strike?)  
"Well they lost, of course, because they put it down to absenteeism again. You see they blame that - absenteeism."

(Do you think the workforce will ever get to the point of saying - we're not having it any more?)  
"No, because it's the top union that's doing it. We've taken it to branch. I've taken it to branch - I said it shouldn't have been accepted the way it was, because it's been abused....I've said it to Ferguson and he said he didn't know anything about it! But he DID - it was an agreement made between management and the union. Without consulting the shopfloor - and that's been 6-7 years ago. And I've got that against them myself - movement of labour."

(And you don't think the workers will say we're not having it anymore?)  
"No, because if they turn round and say they're fed up with it, they just say, 'Well if you've got to be moved - you've got to be moved'. And some people resent it. They say, 'Oh, I shan't come to work, or I shall leave....' But you find movement of labour is always blamed on absenteeism - and I disagree. I disagree, because it's really just to suit themselves."

Pip (sub assembly) (42)

From the shopsteward's point of view, of course, there were many problems associated with making the agreement work: 'We're doing management's job.' They attempted to get the agreement changed and raised the issue through the branch. Apart from this, they also tried to limit its effects by seeking to redefine the meaning of the movement of labour clause itself.

(The movement of labour agreement - does it help at all?

"No it doesn't. I've had endless arguments with Mary over it. You see there's mobility of labour and there's movement of labour and they're two entirely different things. Mobility of labour means you can be put onto another job. Movement of labour means the job being moved say, from upstairs - moving a machine downstairs....You do the same job but it's been moved."

Pip (sub assembly) (43)

Another strategy was to try and limit the scope of the agreement, for example, by stipulating that movement could only be made within - but not between - sections. But there is no evidence that movement was prevented in this way.

When the women on Kathy's section in the paintshop were asked to go onto the grinding machine in the EPS plant they complained about having to move because the noise was intense and damaging. (It affected their balance as well as their hearing). The two sections were quite separate, but because the EPS had been added to Kathy's constituency (i.e. she represented them as a shopsteward), they were now considered to be linked. Her discussion of this incident raises too, the personal feelings of guilt and discomfort at having to police the agreement as the representative of the union, rather than act as the representative of the members.

(Is there anything you have done as a shopsteward that you have kicked yourself for?)

"In a way yes - at the EPS I was told that if it was a job on your section - it was like, included in your section - you couldn't refuse to do that job. Now, the grinding machine comes under the EPS and, when the women said to me, 'Do we have to go on the work.' I says, 'Well, as far as I know, that job's included, like, on our section and you can't really refuse to do it.' And then Pearl came over like, and we was talking about it....And anyway I felt guilty saying that - but....In a way they had to do it, because it was included in our section. But I didn't like the idea of having to TELL them that, you know what I mean? Because I knew how they felt and the way it was."  
Emphasis in original Kathy (Paintshop) (44)

Jill, as a supervisor on the assembly lines had found it particularly difficult to act in accordance with both the requirements of her job and her own 'union principles' which opposed movement of labour - especially when it led to doubling-up jobs:

"It's true - WE are allowing it! Even me! I've got to admit....I'm not actually a shopsteward for my girls on the lines - but I ....you know....It kills me when I 'ave to say to a girl, 'Double-up!' Now, I used to say to 'em 'When I ask yer - refuse'. But I was...When they refused, and they was taken in the office: 'Well, supervisor told me not to!' So I thought, 'Damn it! If they can't speak for themselves and use their own mind, I'm not gonna give them any advice anymore!' You know....But you've got partly to blame - the operators themselves for doing it: but you've also got the union - for allowing it. And it's done all over the shopfloor you know - it's terrible!"

Jill (final assembly supervisor) (45)

Why did the shop stewards find it easier to make the agreement work than to represent their members' grievances?

"The trouble is with a lot of the union people - they don't follow through their convictions - they're scared - which is a pity. I mean, I'm scared - there's no doubt about it - I shake like a leaf when I'm in with John Smith....Well the shopstewards, they would like the backing of the union - and this union here, well they won't get it."

Jill (final assembly supervisor) (46)

PROBLEMS WITH PROCEDURES

(Have you done anything you have kicked yourself for afterwards?)

"Yes, I didn't go through procedure properly - I didn't lose the case, but I could have"

Janet (sub assembly) (47)

The procedure for dealing with requests, complaints and disputes was set out in the Blue Book agreement. Most of the women stewards discussed the use of these procedures as being highly problematic. In this section we look at some of the aspects in which they were found to be so.

Edna referred to the procedures as "a protection for management". She described how they acted as a considerable disincentive against members raising a grievance in the first place, and how this caused frustration for herself as a shop steward:

"If the girls have got a problem on the line then they tell the supervision, then, if the supervision can't sort the problem out, she tells the forewoman, if the forewoman can't sort it out, she tells the superintendent, and, if the superintendent can't sort it out, he calls the shopsteward in - and we take it up."

(So the members don't come straight to you?)

"Well not....this is procedures. Some do go out of of procedure sometimes and you have to say - can you go back into procedures - you know, to go through in the right manner. Before they actually see me - they have to see at least three people, and then I have to go back and follow their tracks....Well, it's a protection to me, that seems a protection to management - really, isn't it? Because that means there isn't a person that can come to the shopsteward unless management knows about it."

(Have they come straight to you?)

"There have been occasions - and I've had to tell them to go through the procedures - quite often.

(And have they come back to you?)

No, actually, they sort of - 'Oh, it's not worth it...' Yes, many a time.

But....There are some problems they probably have and they can't explain to the management - but they can explain to us better...Because you can see the worker's point of view - because you've got the problem too. But, of course, I can't say anything about it, because if they did come with a problem to me I know I could do something about it - but I've got to tell them to go through the supervisor, the forewoman and the superintendent. And I know that - once you say those three people - that's it: 'Oh, bugger it then!' And I think, you know, that it's a good case. But they just think 'Oh, if I go to the superintendent, I may as well tell him myself anyway - what's the point in coming to you?...'"

Edna (final assembly) (48)

One of the reasons why the use of procedures had an inhibiting effect was because, in order to be able to process a grievance in this way, it has to be an issue which has already <sup>been</sup> defined as negotiable. Thus the procedures themselves become part of a process of defining problems out of the sphere of union action.

(Have you ever had a problem you couldn't deal with in procedure - and gone outside it?)

"You can do it occasionally. Everybody has a problem sometimes that you can sort out by having a quiet word. When it happens like that, it's usually the members asking the impossible so you just have a quiet word in their ear and make 'em see sense you know."

Elizabeth (Machine Shop) (49)

"If I think there is a case for the union to be involved, I tell them to go through procedure. Ask for me first, but go through procedure. I always tell them to go through procedure, because that's the first thing they throw at you: procedure - if you don't "

My emphasis

Pip (sub assembly) (50)

But quite clearly, apart from the question of defining the problem, it was the way in which the procedures rendered the shopsteward passive in the first instance, and forced the individual member into

initiating any action, which served more effectively than anything else, to filter out problems from the grievance machinery.

(Do you have members who find difficulty in doing the job they are put on?)

"I find this happens quite a lot really, on the main lines, but they don't all get to me. You know, I don't always hear about them, because I've also got to stand there and do a job. I can't just go and walk about like the supervisors do - and unless people bring it up to me, then there isn't a thing I can do about it. (So how do you get to hear about them?) Well, through gossip, back-chat like, on a dinner time or a break-time. They'll say, 'They've moved her again....oh, you know she's only been here a week and they're moving her.' And like, this dinner-time, a girl was saying she was on five....she's new, she's on a month's trial and she had five jobs yesterday. She said, 'I shouldn't be having five jobs - I'm new....' She's not talking to me as a shopsteward, she's just telling the supervisor - and I sit by the supervisor. As I say, she's just had the coat\*- and she said, 'Well, if you're a bit slow on the job, I've got to find a job that you're going to get used to - so you can pick your speed up! BUT, I look at it this way - there is that point of looking at it - but I look at it this way, if they don't give them TIME to pick up their speed, how are they going to know that they're suitable for that job? But they don't come through the proper procedure and see me. If I poked my nose in, then - all I'd get off the management was - 'Well, did she ask to see anybody else before she saw you?' Well, she hasn't. So it's up to them isn't it? I hear about quite a few things like that, but it never actually gets to me so - either they've sorted it out or they don't bother....

Edna (final assembly) (51)

In this case, Edna also refers to the extra problem of being rendered passive in the sense of being tied to her job and less able to discover problems that arise. Jill who was a supervisor was not subject to the same immobility and she could see how this might enable her to do the job of a shop steward more effectively.

\*just been made a supervisor: given a blue overall.



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"But this is what I'm arguing about. The shopstewards....well, so long as they can avoid trouble....they keep away from it anyway. Now I don't mean to say go and nose it out - but for God's sake once a day, go up to your members - 'Have you got any problems?' - which I do to mine. Because I mean, my members are all over this factory, upstairs, moulding, everywhere. But sometime during the day I 'ave to hit one of those departments, an' I always ask them - if they've got....and they 'ave, they've got problems every day... (laughs) not serious ones, but....little grumps and groans."

(But most shopstewards are not allowed to do that - the member has to come to them? Can a line steward go down her line?)

"No, but I mean, I'm talkin' about before the bell goes at 8, - which is their own time, admittedly."

"....because if you wait for permission...I know it shouldn't be withheld....I mean, like the case on line one, not so long ago - the girls asked for the shopsteward, they'd got a problem with the count - and...it wasn't convenient for them to see the shopsteward. Now, when the shopsteward heard that, she should've gone right into the office and said - you must not withhold reasonable access - sort of thing. But no! She give 'im 24 hours! Bend the rules a bit, 'cos BSR bend 'em, so why shouldn't we! And that's where they walk over us really."

Jill (final assembly supervisor) (52)

It is interesting to note that in two instances, mobile servicemen represented the women workers. This was in the moulding shop where the women were isolated, being widely separated and hidden from each other by the huge machines to which they were also effectively tied by the count.

One way of overcoming the problem of immobility and isolation and to get grievances raised might have been to hold meetings of the members on a section. This was forbidden and would have been difficult to achieve without drawing unwelcome attention on the open shopfloor - which was extremely crowded in any case - providing little space in which to meet. The same constraints did not apply to the men who

mostly worked in shops or sections of plant separated off from the open floor. Many of them, in addition had relatively greater freedom of movement attached to their jobs. Overall it was clear that the procedures themselves served to inhibit, to a very great extent, the possibility of the problems experienced by the women workers being articulated as grievances, through the system of representation provided by union organisation. For example, on the main assembly lines:

"The lines are very complicated - in work, union-wise - in every way. I mean, it's the most strenuous work, I think, in the factory. The most frustration is on the line and well - as we call it - sweat... Everything! And it is - I s'pose they've made it - more complicated on the lines, to get to your shopsteward, because... Well, in one way it's good for us, but in another way it's very good for the management. Because, I s'pose, if we had to take up every case, we wouldn't have a job on the line! But I never seem to get round to any cases really these days. So whether they're not coming to me or they're just saying, 'Oh, blow it,' you know - because they do get like that.....

I agree with what the girls say to me sometimes. They say, 'Well, if we've got to go through the supervision and the forewoman and the superintendent - let's take it up ourselves. What are we paying a shopsteward for? What are we paying the union for?' - which.... I've got to agree with them. And, they say, 'It's a protection for management; which again I've got to agree with them. I mean - it's not a protection for the girls is it?'  
My emphasis Edna (Final assembly) (53)

There were also problems however, when grievances were raised. It was the common fate of many issues simply to "perish". That is, they remained unresolved and the workers gave up, apparently, pursuing their "complaints, requests or disputes". Two features of the procedure itself seemed to promote this. One was the built-in delay associated with having to follow through all the stages. Although the first significant level of decision - making on management's part was probably superintendent, on the final assembly lines, for example, there were another two stages before this. There was plenty of

scope for managers to pass decisions on, further up the line, in order to increase the delay. Secondly, at the higher levels of procedure (i.e. once the convenor had been brought in) the member(s) and frequently their stewards too, lost their involvement in the issue and matters could more easily be allowed to drop or be "traded". (54) Related to this question of levels and 'effectiveness' is the point that effective decision-making within (both management and) the union structure lay with the top officials, while the impact of the problems and pressures for change impinged on the membership at the bottom i.e. on the shopfloor - at the point of production. It is one indication of the extent to which the channels between officials and membership more effectively communicated the interests of the former than the latter, that the grievances we are examining failed to appear at the higher levels of negotiation, or only made such an appearance as part of the process of being 'lost'. It is necessary, of course, to explain why this should be the case. Here, however, we note that delay and the loss of effectiveness associated with higher levels of procedure constituted a problem for the women in the union at BSR.

Some of the grievances which we looked at earlier were handled by the shopstewards (for example, bad parts) but only to reappear because at shopfloor level no significant impression could be made on management's production policy. The question of negotiating levels was, therefore, highly relevant to the shopsteward's effectiveness in handling the members' problems.

"I get on OK with my own superintendent, but if problems get passed up the line then I'll get no satisfaction. If it's a problem that can be DEALT with by the superintendent then - all well and good - we don't do too bad."

Eunice (final assembly) (55)

This meant that on the larger issues the shopstewards were less effective altogether.

"I don't think the union is strong enough at all."  
(How could it be stronger do you think?)

"Well I've got no authority really at all, you know I've got to go higher up all the time. I've no..., I won't mention the factory but there (Leyland) the shopstewards can call the strike and then go and explain what's gone on. I mean, here I've got to go and explain, and then it's got to be 'phoned higher and higher, you know until....And even then - they say, 'No, you can't stop work'".

(And the shop stewards are responsible for keeping the agreement?)

"I know what I've got to do like, but there's a load of cases where I think - it's just not fair, I should be allowed to do something, but I can't without going higher, you know?"

(What sort of issues would you particularly like to be able to do something about?)

"Well I'd like to be able to help the women more. Like, where their performances drop - waiting time, the money and like....your waiting time, it's only day rate. And it does affect your money quite a bit. I'd like to help them there. And the bad parts situation and things like that."  
(How much could you be down with bad parts and waiting time?)

"You could be a couple or three pounds down, depending how much waiting time we've got."

(How could you remedy that?)

"Because it's not our fault we're waiting is it? It shouldn't affect your money, I don't think."

(So you'd have average earnings for waiting?)

"Yes".

(And what could you do about bad parts, pay them for the units they've made?)

"Yes. Because like, we have bad main plates and they get right to the final inspection - they're no good. They've got that bad scratch on them - they can't go through, or they've got impurities in the metal. That's a unit the girls aren't going to get paid for."

(So they should be paid for all the units they put together, bad or good?)

Yes. Or they should make an allowance for breakdowns - because we get about 40 a day I should imagine. You know, a good day and a very bad day - it would

average out about 40. I mean, there's not always anything the paint girls can do with them - if it's too bad.

Barbara (final assembly) (56)

Apart from the question of the way their effectiveness was linked to different levels of negotiation which was in turn governed by the grievance procedure, there were other specific features of the procedure itself, in particular the built in delays, which can be related to the large number of grievances left unresolved - or resolved in management's favour because they were simply abandoned.

Jill had a case which ran for five weeks. A line was being disbanded and management wanted to 'take the coats off' the supervisors and to make them into operators again.

"It took me 5 weeks and...When I say 5 weeks, actually....I failed to agree the first time, then it took a couple or three days for me to get back in again on the next phase....Actually, that's what it was - it was time WASTING it wasn't time arguing. It was time-wastin' till my next.... Because I kept just registering failures to agree."

Emphasis in original

Jill (final assembly supervisor) (57)

Eventually she got to stage 4 and a meeting in the conference room with the factory manager, Mr. Smith. When he saw that she was prepared to go to stage 5, meeting the industrial relations director which meant the dispute was to be taken outside the factory, he came up with a solution.

In this case, the dispute did not 'perish' as a result of the delays. In the next example, this did happen. Significantly, it is one of the (very) few instances where a steward described an attempt to take on one of the problems we have been concerned to explore: doubling-up - the intensification of labour.

"What happened was, someone didn't turn up - it was absenteeism again. And there was a girl, she was on 'weights'; and she had to do 'heights' as well - so that was 2 jobs. She said, 'they're always picking on me'. And I know she'd been doing it all week and it was getting very tiring. So I said, 'Well, you should complain', I said, 'but don't do it out of procedures - go through the right procedures.' Well, she did and I took it as far as the works manager. You know I went through the supervisor, the forewoman, the superintendent and now I'm with Mr. White. Well, while I was fighting it with Mr. White, he said, 'I'll come back to you on this matter' - and things like this. And he said it was all caused through absenteeism. Well, I was going to put in a failure to agree to see Mr. Smith. That's what I WAS going to do because I wasn't getting any satisfaction off Mr. White.

The following day, I came into work and I realised I'd left my heater on, which I was drying my clothes round, and I was afraid in case it got too hot and it singed....my husband was going to complain. So I asked for a pass-out. This was at 10 o'clock. Well, when I came back at 11 o'clock - the girl who was complaining, had doubled-up. She went back to it, she doubled-up again. She said, 'Oh, in the end, I've had to do it'. So, of course, it made me look - while my back was turned - it made it look as tho' I was causing all the disturbance and the trouble. And you've got the supervisor saying - 'she's a troublemaker, she is.'

Well, they would never complain to supervision anyway - yet they WERE complaining to me. And I just needed that time to go through the procedures. It took three days. When I started to complain, they stopped doubling her up for three days. But when I went home the one day, from 10 o'clock to 11 o'clock - and everyone in the factory knew about it - she'd doubled-up. And these are the problems you get - unless you've got your eye on them all the time - they do it. So what's the point in fighting?"

Edna (final assembly) (58)

It would appear that some issues are more 'perishable' than others: and presumably one of the factors in the case above was the operator's assessment that, ultimately, the union did not oppose movement of labour. She would not have support from the officials, and she would, eventually, have to do it. In assessing the difference in 'perishability' the question of wider support for issues in dispute is an

important aspect of how long they can be sustained. This is particularly the case when 'unofficial action' seems to be required in order to put pressure on the grievance procedure itself - as in the case of the faulty gauges on the welders: "It's been over two months. He just keeps saying - the parts are coming - but they're losing as much as £2-£3 per week." Sarah(59). These workers had not yet taken action. In the example of a group of workers who did - on the pick-up arms section, it will be seen that in doing so, there was a risk of having the issue removed from the 'recognised' agenda of negotiation altogether, support from officials usually being conditional upon procedures being properly followed.

There was risk involved too, for the shop stewards, who frequently went 'out of procedure' in order to deal effectively with an issue - in particular, to avoid it's death by delay.

(Have you done anything you have kicked yourself for afterwards?)

"Yes, I'm inclined to overstep procedure sometimes. I just can't see the sense in going through supervisor, senior supervisor, chargehand and superintendent, and by the time all that's gone through....It's something so stupid - that the girls....when they tell the supervisor, she might be busy. So it might be 2 hours before the other one gets told about it. And sometimes, I've even dealt with a case before it's even gone to the next stage - I've often done that and I'm being pulled up because I've not gone through procedures.

I think if a girl's got a problem she should be able to ask for permission to go off her line to see her shopsteward. Or ask for the shopsteward, without having to go all through this rigmarole."

(Do they ever come straight to you?)

"Oh yes."

(Do you have to send them.....?)

"I do but I don't. I deal with it myself when I can.

(Have you ever tried to change that?)

"They wouldn't change it. Never - if it's in the book of rules"

Tracy (final assembly) (60)



Of course, in theory, the use of procedures is supposed to constrain management and thus protect the membership from arbitrary or precipitate action. In practice, however, it would seem that it was the shopstewards (and the membership) who had their powers to initiate action constrained to a much higher degree.

"The older women who don't answer back, they just sit there and take it. Even people that really want help - but you can't help them unless they come to you - you're not allowed to step in any old time - though sometimes you do...."

Janet (sub assembly) (61)

Since management retain the initiative in any case, through asserting managerial prerogatives (also written into the agreement, clauses 25, 26, 27, 34 and 35), the grievance machinery is, in the first place, largely a mechanism for processing workers' responses or defences, rather than a means of them initiating changes for themselves. This is, of course, the situation with grievance procedures generally (62). But still it has to be explained why, even in this limited respect, in some workplaces the system is more responsive to workers' needs than in others.

Management and shopstewards' grievance handling : the balance of power on the shopfloor

There appears to be no intrinsic advantage or disadvantage to either management or the workforce attached to formal/written agreements as averse to unwritten, custom and practice 'rules'. In respect of either of these the advantages and strategies of each side will change, depending on the issues and circumstances. Written terms tend to have the character of being more inflexible and more widely generalised. To the extent therefore, that they reflect the balance of power pertaining in the employment relationship, they tend to rigidify it.

The bargaining agreement at BSR contained a number of written, substantive terms which expressed the employer's interest - we have examined one of the most significant from the women workers' point of view - the movement of labour clause. This both reflected and consolidated management's power on the shopfloor. In written form it did this all the more effectively - from management's point of view:

"We don't normally have much trouble with it at all. And, invariably, we have the full co-operation of the shopstewards - if we do have movement of labour. I mean, they know the rules - the rules are clearly laid down - full movement of labour."

Barry White (factory manager) (63)

And they would have liked to have had the new disciplinary procedure for absenteeism ('the absenteeism agreement') established in a similar form, for the same reason.

"The absentee procedure must....should be put in the book. We're working from a separate agreement now, which is more or less custom and practice, but is not in writing - that would be a good thing to have in...."

Barry White (Factory Manager) (64)

Procedural terms, on the other hand, do not codify the balance of power in quite the same way, and neither do arrangements for setting up the representative system. (They both still express this, of course, to the extent that management retains the initiative and stewards are rendered passive; and features such as the number of stages or the time limits may improve or exacerbate this). But the procedure itself is a standardised form of communication, operated within the system of representation which runs in three directions: between membership, management and the union organisation. Often (but not always) established in the first place as a result of strength having to be used on the workers' side, the balance of power in the employment relationship may be more readily expressed subsequently, in the degree of tilt or 'slope' of these channels thereafter.

We have already noted a lack of responsiveness in the procedure at BSR such that it appeared to work more in management's favour. We now go on to examine further, their degree of domination over the representative system as a whole.

The relationship between the system of grievance processing and the relative (in)effectiveness of the union on the shopfloor is illustrated in this example, where Janet contrasts management's initiative and freedom of action with the shopstewards' and members' activity of 'grieving':

"Last week management tried to tell the members that they couldn't have any more passouts. Well, the shopstewards said - No, they couldn't tell them that. But they still tried to say the women must bring letters and appointment cards in. Well, many appointments are done by 'phone or at the hospital and at very short notice....the managers don't have to think about who is going to let the gas man in...."

"(And) people don't know about or use procedure in the way they should do - so they don't come to me with their problems....And management can use this against the shopstewards. They say, 'They don't do anything for you.'"

Janet (sub assembly) (65)

We can now go on to see how the whole area of managerial initiative was not confined to the organisation of production, labour control or to rule-making - as in the example above. It extended, crucially, into the system of shopfloor representation itself. Overall, management played a significant role in shaping the grievance handling activities of the shopstewards, Edna expressed this quite clearly:

"I was once going to have a girl walk out because she had a lot of stock on the floor and she couldn't cope. And management didn't seem to be taking much notice of her. And I fetched her back and said, 'Don't get walking out, don't be stupid,' you know, 'I'll go in the office with you and sort it out'.

And we have got satisfaction there, everything came off alright - she didn't walk out and she took her coat off and went back to work. I think it's when the pressure gets on top of you, you know and you just can't cope really. But that was because I saw her walking out and I ran after her you see. If that had been another case I would not even have known about it.

You see, they say DON'T RELY ON THE MANAGEMENT, but you have to rely on the management. You have to rely on the management for a good many things here really. Because if you go to them and say 'Are you alright.' and they give you a problem on the line, then you're going out of procedure. Until they have actually seen the management you can't do anything - so, you have to rely on the management to fetch you in. Because if the management don't think you ought to be called in, then they needn't bother had they?"  
Emphasis in original                      Edna (final assembly) (66)

But, quite apart from taking advantage of that aspect of the grievance procedure which denied initiative to the stewards, there was, alongside this, a whole area where management was given the initiative in the union's representative system. Together with the grievance procedure, the Blue Book contained management's disciplinary procedure which backed up the rules and substantive terms in the agreement.

"Occasionally, you get the maverick who throws up and says, 'I'm not going to do that job'. So you follow through the procedure."

Barry White (Factory Manager) (67)

This procedure had been used 'offensively' by management right from the start - as is revealed by the convenor's discussion of the union's early days.

"One of the main problems we'd got was perpetual absenteeism. The procedure - in the Blue Book, was printed immediately the union came in, with verbal and written warnings administered to the workers. And the shopstewards were immediately involved in this."

(Did the absenteeism improve?)

"Oh no, you'll always get this in a women's factory..."

Pearl (sub assembly convenor) (68)

She didn't feel that absenteeism had been any worse before the procedures. The difference they made was that the women were brought before the management in a more systematic way. And all she hoped was that: "The right words were used". Brought back to the present day the convenor considered absenteeism again:

"It's worse when the school holidays are on with smaller children or three or four at home - you can't leave them. We even get it when the Blackpool illuminations are on - or a lot will have the Friday off if they're going away for the weekend. Or else, the women have time off if their husbands have a winter holiday...."

(Do they get a warning for that?)

"(hesitates) - well yes, but it depends...."

(Do you think they should )

"Not really, no. But, there you go again, it's in the procedure. It was drawn up by the GMWU and the company not the likes of us you see, it was by the officials and...But, let's be honest about it, as long as they (the members) don't repeat the practice - well, those are scrapped. It doesn't go onto the record or anything really.

The only thing that I've got about those warnings, quite honestly, is that - you get people go to pieces - and you do. Alright then, if there's theft, pilfering or over-booking, then by all means, or passing bad work - and I would say that is when warnings should be given, but not...."

Pearl (sub assembly convenor) (69)

As we can note from this, "the shop stewards were immediately involved" in this disciplinary offensive. And it is clear that if the membership were inhibited from raising "complaints, requests or disputes" through the system of representation and the institutional channels provided - the same could not be said of management.

It is clear that right from the earliest days of unionisation, the bulk of the shopsteward's representational function was initiated by management - when the shopstewards were called in to witness disciplinary action.

"When the union first came in - I didn't know, that when I came to, shall we say, stand for the welfare of that member - whether she was a member or whether she wasn't. But at that time it didn't mean anything to me because I was a shopsteward over that section - and I took the problems, because I was probably asked to by the superintendent - to go along to the office with Mrs so and so....and I wouldn't know whether she was paying her union dues or not."

Pearl (sub assembly convenor) (70)

When Edna therefore referred to her grievance load being reduced, she saw management as being partly responsible for this:

"I did once have a case of absenteeism, where they kept having time off...but we used to go in every-time with our members - when they used to be taken into the office to be given a warning. But now, for the last six months, the superintendent hasn't sent for us in. And the members are not asking so, we don't go in with them. It's very....you know, we're sort of being...They go in, and they ask - why are they away and one thing and another - and whatever's said to them, I don't know....

The only time that they've asked for me in, is when they actually signed on the warning. But, of course, I don't know what's going on - because I haven't been in before - I don't know how many days she's had off, and if they're doing the right procedures or anything like that. It's very complicated really and, the only time that they've called me in is when it really gets bad, you know and I don't think it's fair, because they're sort of flinging me in the deep end. I mean, how can I stand up and fight for 'em when I don't know how many days they've had off, or what for, or anything? But I don't think it was fair with the superintendent NOT telling them, because I don't think he says to them - you can have your shopsteward in." (Can you do anything about this?)

"No, not really, because they turn round and say - well they can't want you because they know they can ask for you, they don't ask for you, so we don't send for you - you see. But I think if the management and the union could work it a bit better, then you wouldn't have to ask for the shopsteward. I think management should already turn round to the people that are concerned and say - well, I should have your shopsteward in. It is a difficult situation, because it's all down to your members - if they don't ask for us, then how can we....? I mean, I can't say - ask for me or I'll threaten you!

Or anything like that. I mean it's up to....They know that I'm there."

Edna (final assembly) (71)

Management's domination of the union's system of representation was significantly maintained by the degree of initiative they assumed in instigating disciplinary action against the women workers i.e. the weight and extent of this disciplinary load. A major consequence was to render the structure of representation at shopfloor level even less responsive to the women workers, and tilted more firmly towards management:

"The management of BSR are very fond of getting the shopstewards to do their duty - things that I think shouldn't be to do with a shopsteward in a way - such as carrying information. When they've got any information to pass over to the members then they shouldn't have to ask the shopstewards to do it for them."

Elizabeth (Machine shop) (72)

One of the reasons trade union representation is put forward as promoting good industrial relations practice is precisely because of the channels of communication which are facilitated. But isn't it also relevant to ask whose interests are being represented? Why? And to what effect?

"I don't think we ought to be involved in telling people what they've got to do - I think that should be management's side. I think we're there to help the members, not push them into doing things."

Janet (sub assembly) (73)

The terms of the bargaining relationship were heavily weighted in the employer's favour. Management's retention of their prerogatives in every aspect pertaining to the organisation of production, ensured their almost unfettered dominance over workers on the shopfloor. And this, together with their retention of initiative in respect of disciplining, ensured their dominance over the representational system.

We should note that both of these are areas traditionally eschewed in trade unions' collective bargaining practices, to the extent that these are patterned on a 'counter-vailing power' model, and mainly focus on compensatory aspects of labour - rather than its degree or mode of utilisation. Herding noted this differentiation of interest, in relation to the American plants he studied.

"....in both unions (auto and steel) the local, 'non-economic' working conditions were matters of high interest for the rank and file, whereas the leadership stressed, and won from management, concessions in areas such as employment stabilization (for a diminished workforce), fringe benefits placing a premium on long service, and higher off-job rewards."

Herding (1972) p.34

The union officials at BSR repeatedly contended that it was in the best interests of the membership, for the firm to be run as efficiently as possible - it's survival did indeed depend upon it. On these grounds they could not justify 'interference' in respect of either production or labour force organisation/control. A division of labour was acknowledged in this bargaining policy whereby it was up to management to make due profits and: "the union, they're out to help management make profits - and they have a share in them." This is the basis of the pluralists' view of collective bargaining whereby "everybody gains". But we also need to examine - what are the costs? And who bears them?

#### Conclusions : Causes and consequences

We began this Chapter by enquiring how far the women workers at BSR benefitted from the machinery established as a result of unionisation - given the serious nature of the problems they experienced on the shopfloor. We found that their utilisation of these institutional resources was minimal. Moreover the resources appeared to be



least effective in precisely those areas we have identified as having greatest significance for the development of the women workers' job controls and bargaining resources.

Examining some of the issues specifically, we found that many problems were never raised as grievances in the first place, or they were raised by members but not taken up by stewards, or they were taken up, only to be lost - because they perished after delay, were rapidly abandoned by the membership or were simply won outright by management. As an overall consequence, the membership's ability and willingness to either take up or pursue grievances was reduced and the shopstewards suffered from frustration, or were soon voted out of/gave up office, because of the problems they either failed to take up or when they did - to win. (74) How are these problems to be explained?

Our analysis of the collective bargaining agreement setting out the terms of the bargaining relationship goes some way towards providing an explanation. Firstly we have seen how particular aspects such as the movement of labour clause directly constrained the grievance handling of shopstewards and grievance-raising of the membership.

Secondly, we have been able to demonstrate that the trade union's 'compensatory' bargaining policy - which is also reflected in this agreement - fitting in with management's tight guard over certain prerogatives, left the latter almost wholly unconstrained in respect of production and labour control. As a result, access to, and the utility of institutional resources (the procedure and representative system), from the women workers' point of view was further reduced. Indeed, management was able to swing these (even) more in their own favour.

Thus in two significant respects, the sources of the women steward's ineffectiveness in respect of their members' grievances, and the latter's lack of involvement with, indeed, alienation from the union organisation on the shopfloor can be seen to derive from the institutional arrangements and relationships - rather than their own female/personal capacities. In what follows, we take up an examination of the causes and further consequences of this in more detail.

#### CAUSES

In the previous Chapter we have proposed that collective bargaining involves the distribution of both costs and benefits, and the balance of power in bargaining relationships determines the nature and extent of these. We have been particularly concerned to explore the implications or effects of this unequal distribution, firstly between the employer and the workforce, and secondly, within the ranks of the labour force itself. One consequence we have already proposed is that the greater the predominance of the employer's interest carried in joint bargaining, the more unresponsive the representative structures of the union are likely to become, from the point of view of the membership. And in this Chapter we have shown how this was the case with regard to the grievance machinery established as a result of unionisation.

A second consequence we have identified as having a bearing on this question of distribution is the pattern of representation within the organisation. Two problematic features - the dominance of both the male membership and the union's full-time officers are seen to be related to both the balance of distribution and the lack of responsiveness of the structures in relation to the women members. But

we have suggested this relationship is complex, because the pattern of representation is also an outcome determined by other sets of relationships - and therefore, remains, itself, to be explained.

In the conclusions of this Chapter, therefore, we can usefully show how the primary (unequal) bargaining relationship between employer's and union's representatives served directly, to structure the pattern of representation on the shopfloor. This is a particularly interesting case study because it draws together a number of the points already made and illustrates, in terms of a single issue, how bargaining interests and relationships structured institutional arrangements and policies in such a way as to render the union organisation problematic for the women workers especially. Again, it concerns the distribution of a 'cost' element (from the worker's point of view), and draws attention to the impact of this at every level of the union's organisational structure: from the full-time officials through to the factory convenor and down to the shopsteward handling members' grievances on the shopfloor.

#### CASE STUDY : NEW STARTERS

"Union security tends to become a privilege imposed on one sector of the working class and is accepted by management, for the price of maintaining or even creating (as in the construction industry) a non-union sector with less rigidities in wages, fringes, employment guarantees, and particularly in work rules."

Herding (1972) p.35

In 1976 the union officials finalised an agreement with management which, as the preamble stated, was intended "to formalise practices which had been in operation in the company since December 1974". At this time, the union side had accepted the company's proposals on redundancy in return for 100% union membership in the plants. The

union had, of course, been given sole bargaining rights as part of the original recognition agreement (i.e. since 1970), but as we have pointed out, for a number of reasons - especially the high rate of turnover maintained by the firm - there was always a significant number of non-members in the workforce. We have also noted how one consequence of unionisation may have been to 'stabilise' employment in the firm, to the extent that the rapid cycle of lay-off/re-recruitment characterising Macdonald's day, seemed to have given way to a reliance on "natural wastage"/re-recruitment with the incidence of lay-off less frequent (although possibly more extensive) than before. From the women worker's point of view there may have been a sense in which this 'stabilisation' of employment was more apparent than real. Because, as we have demonstrated, management's reliance on "natural wastage" informed their practices in relation to the mass of women on the shopfloor, engendering an equally chronic form of employment insecurity which was now, moreover, directly linked to driving, work intensification and speed-up. On the other hand, unionisation had introduced a system of representation and some requirements for consultation between the workforce and management which the latter did, also, have to take into consideration.

We have already pointed out the contradictory requirements of 'flexibility' and 'stability' from the point of view of worker and employer, and the necessity of 'flexibility' for the latter remained just as strong - possibly stronger - in the period following unionisation than before. When the feasibility of the old, straight hire and fire methods was largely removed, as far as the bulk of the labour force was concerned, we have noted that they were not removed altogether - but pushed down to one particular section of the workforce,

which was also the weakest - the new starters.

Management wished to retain the system whereby they hired more workers than they needed, used them, if they were school-leavers, as cheap labour for a month, selected those they wanted and fired the rest. They granted the union a 100% membership facility, whereby before starting work all new recruits would be given a union application form and told it was a condition of employment with the company which would then immediately proceed to deduct union dues from their wages. The quid pro quo for this was that new starters would not be covered by the system of representation. Thus the final clause of the union membership agreement reads:

"Notwithstanding any of the foregoing each new starter must complete a four week probation period with the company, subject to the conditions of probation i.e. discipline, dismissal etc., without the need for consultation."

We can see in this a nice illustration of Herding's point, reproduced in the quotation at the head of this section. What happened when these 'costs' incorporated in the agreement, were borne by workers on the shopfloor? (75)

The problem of job insecurity was, as we have seen, particularly acute for the women workers and, therefore, a major concern of their shopstewards generally. The needs of the new starters, a particularly vulnerable group in any case, were, clearly most pressing and nearly all the women stewards mentioned the problems of this group. (Problems which they had, themselves once directly experienced.)

"I get really upset, I get uptight because I've got three lines, I'm shopsteward over and the motor line. And they bring these girls - a new one, straight from school, and they put her on a line. And some of these

operators that we've on now - we've been on those lines 2, 3 and 4 years. And you just CANNOT expect those young girls to keep up... and instead of splitting the jobs - if they were only given one small job to begin with - once she gets up speed on that one, build it up, gradually! But they don't. They give her the full job - And it's PATHETIC to see them you know, it is really - they get all uptight and they get ever soupset."

(How many stay?)

"Not many"

(Do they leave or are they sent down road after the trial period?)

"It is up to the supervisor. If they don't think they're going to fit in, then they're sent up the road before the month's up. And then I butt in and I'm not s'posed to. I do a lot of butting in when I'm not s'posed to! You know, because I don't think these kids have had a fair trial. We had a case about a month ago. A girl was put on the line for one day, and for the rest of the week and the following week she was put on labouring - fetching sub-plates. So on the Friday she (supervisor) must have taken her upstairs and said she wasn't suitable. She came to see me (we've always been told it's nothing to do with the union for the first month like. I can't see this, because when she starts, her union money is stopped anyway - out of her first week's money). She came up crying and said he'd told her she could work a week's notice or finish on Friday. I asked what - the jobs she'd done. I was so angry! Saw the superintendent - arranged she should have another week's trial and be left on one job. After all that, she came for another couple of days, then never came again. After I'd taken all that trouble...! (But) I don't like....you know, well I've got a 15 year old so I mean she's going to leave school - she might come here - she might....that could be my girl if you look at it...."

Emphasis in original

Tracy (final assembly) (76)

not

It would be unusual, therefore, to find a **story** such as that recounted by Jenny, who was a shopsteward for women working on one of the final assembly lines. She also represented men and women workers in the machine shop nearby. The only thing that was slightly different about this case was that the member concerned was male.

A seventeen year old lad, who was a new starter, had been told by his foreman (an 'old style' manager with a reputation for bullying) that he was going to be sacked.

"His foreman didn't think he was suitable for the job; he wasn't quick enough. But he hadn't been here a month, he'd only been here two weeks. And he asked him, apparently, if he could be a bit quicker, but he didn't give the child time to learn and he sacked him. So somebody must have told the child who I was and he came over.... He was serving the lines, taking the parts to the lines. But apparently he wasn't.... He was serving those quick enough, they were never out of parts, they didn't lose any money. But apparently he was falling down on other little jobs. But it is like I was saying to the foreman when I was talking to him. He said they sent him to 'the cage' or something, for some parts. And they'd had to go and look for him. So I said 'Well, let's face it, it is a big factory! And to put a child in a factory and just take him up once and just show him where it is - and say now you go up there and fetch it....' Apparently the child had got lost. So I mean it isn't his fault. So I looked at him and I said, 'Well shall I tell you something? If you sent me up', I said, 'I'd be lost - because I've never been up, and I've been here 6 years!' So I mean, it's got to be frightening for a child of that age!"

Jenny had taken the matter up with the convenor and got the lad transferred to a different job.

"I saw him the other day as a matter of fact, and he said, 'Thank you ever so much, I'm ever so happy now'."

Jenny (final assembly) (77)

But all had not been quite as simple as it sounds. The deputy convenor, acting convenor at the time, (he succeeded to the post at a later date) explained the conflict of interest this grievance had raised within the union side. The topic came up in interview, as part of a discussion about the differences between the men and the women in the union and the discussion is particularly interesting in a whole number of respects - so it is reproduced in full.

(Do the women raise things you don't think the union should be involved in?)

"Yes. Size of teapots and toilet paper not soft enough. It's just the fact that they bring that sort of thing up - it isn't that dear to their hearts. You can use the time or effort on something more important. You know, like when I negotiate or anything with the management, I put a lot of effort in... Well I don't like doing for such a small stupid problem. I prefer to save all that flannel for a big problem. You know, to get a big problem solved. I mean there was one the other week, the women were...

There was this young kid, he was being sacked - he hadn't.... they don't come under the union's protection until they've been here for a month. In their first month, if they don't come up to the standard, they're got rid of you see. Well this guy was being got rid of - and he's a very nervous chap, you talk to him and he starts to - I don't know, if he's had an accident or something he starts shaking like this, you know, 'Course the women, when this happened - they go all motherly to him and 'Oh, Ernie, what are you going to do about this?' (This was when I was acting as convenor). I says, 'Well look - really I can't get involved, you know. He's got a month....! so I went and saw the superintendent who he was working for, he says, 'Mate he's a complete waste of time.' I saw a couple of guys he was working with, 'Mate he's useless - he's come here and he don't even know how to hold a broom like'. So that was it. They'd convinced me he was no good and I didn't want to get involved.

But the women were getting quite irate about it, you know and they even had me at the Branch Meeting about it like. And Paul came up, And Paul backed me up, he says, 'Look, we can't - if the kid's no good,' he says, 'We don't want people here who aren't any good because they won't be any contribution to us they'll only be a bloody drag on us....' sort of thing. Anyway the women were still irate about it so...

(What was his job?)

He was only a labourer. When I say only a labourer, I mean that in...I don't mean I look down on labourers or anything like that, you know - But he was only a labourer like, you know what I mean?

So I went in to see John. Now I didn't want to go and see John, because, you know - you can't always get into see John - but....I had to use me charm: 'Look John - I'm not looking for a victory - this kid....' and all that. And I got him to get all his records



out, references from his last place - all the bloody personnel were running round here, there and everywhere bringing all the records down - I felt, oh a prat! And he warned me, of course, that I'd no business whatsoever getting involved with it because the union don't protect anyone until they've been here a month. Anyway from his records we found out that he was an inspector at his last place. So I got John to get him a transfer into the Inspection.

'OK Ernie,' he says, 'but it takes a month', (not to train an inspector but to assess 'em, you know, their capabilities). He says, 'Now in that month, he'll be over his months....' (you know, because he'd only done 3 weeks) 'he'll be over his month's time,' he says 'and by then he should come under your jurisdiction.' He says 'I'll transfer him to inspection as long as you give me your word that if he's a waste of time I can get rid of him.' Well I had to give him my word.

Now - I'd used a lot of, I don't know, charm, whatever you like to call it - to achieve that. But it was, it was wasted, you know. I didn't want to do it. And I was proved right, because the chap over the Inspection is ever such a nice guy and he came up to me the other day and said, 'Look, I'm ever so sorry' he said, 'bout that kid - I put him in the quietest area of the factory - on the goods inwards', he says, 'and he just hasn't got the potential' he says, 'he's just...'

And I'd warned the kid. I said, 'Now look, you've got a second chance, ' I said, 'So work your bloody roe out and have a go - 'cos once you've been here a month, you know, on the new job, you'm OK.' Well I mean he ought to have known then he'd really got to put himself out hadn't he? - for a month. Well, then the gaffer - he says his attitude isn't right or anything - and I believe they're getting rid of him this Friday or they might have got rid of him last Friday. So all that effort was completely wasted, and I didn't want to do it anyway. Because if somebody's no good, I don't want him at the BSR anymore than the management do, because it's going to be no benefit to me you know. But from pressure from the women - they forced me, shall we say, into taking this case up, and I just didn't want to do it, because it was proved to me that the kid was no good anyway. I mean, they were chuffed because I got him transferred. But at the end of the day he's still gone up the road like - I only delayed it. The firm genuinely tried but, he did it OK for a week and then his attitude was just - well, like the attitude of any of the young kids today really - their attitude isn't right is it?"

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (78)

The marked contrast between the significance of the issue (job security) for the female-production worker and ordinary member - at the bottom of the collective bargaining and representational structure, as averse to the male - indirect worker and lay full-time union officer - at the top, is illustrated by the fact that this issue<sup>\*</sup> gave rise to the only occasion in Edna's experience that the women working on her line had "given her their backing". They had stopped work for about 15 minutes - until the problem was (successfully) resolved.

"I had one girl and she'd been moved numerous amounts of times. She couldn't get used to the speed on one job because the supervisor kept moving her. And in the end she turned round and she said that she wasn't quick enough and they were sending her up the road, as they call it, on the Friday. And I went to my members and I said do you think it's fair that this girl should go up the road when she hasn't been on one job long enough to learn the speed? And they fought, that was the only time. They all stuck together and put down their tools, they stuck out. And they moved her off the line - they didn't send her up the road but they moved her off the lines and they gave her a job that she could cope with."

Edna (final assembly) (79)

This case study illustrates the cross-cutting pressures and interests within the union's representational structure, deriving in the first instance, from the deferment of the employer's interest onto the workforce through collective bargaining. It was reinforced by both the institutional interest in the firm's viability and the size of the surplus ("won't be any contribution to us") and the co-exploitative interest within the workforce ("no benefit to me").

The deferment of the employer's interest arose as a result of the inequality of power in the bargaining relationship which became codified in the terms of the membership agreement. We have also been able to

\* In relation to the new starters again

see how this inequality would be maintained as a consequence of the bargaining process itself - which is reciprocal. Through the concerns of the <sup>deputy</sup> convenor, we are given a view of how the whole process of bargaining subsequently had been tilted by the impact of the original agreement. Negotiating at factory level, he was tied into the institutionalised system of reciprocity established in the first place on strongly sloping ground. Thus he now 'owed the employer one' and on balance he feared this future concession would be greater than the one he had gained.

Thus once again we have shown how, when we are examining the effectiveness of the women stewards' grievance handling on the shopfloor, this has to be set in its institutional context. Wherein power inequalities underpin the differentiation of interests - between the employer and the workforce as a whole, between the union as an institution and its membership, and between men and women inside and outside the organisation. The women steward s' relative ineffectiveness, and the women member s' lack of strength in general (even if not in every particular case) can be seen as an outcome - a consequence - of many of the problems they are usually taken to 'cause'.

#### CONSEQUENCES

What are the effects of these institutional arrangements and processes which transmit the employers' interests as costs to the workforce and in doing so render these channels problematic from the latter's point of view? What are the consequences for the workers of bearing these costs? What impact did the deferment or distribution of these have on the particular groups which finally bore them?

We have already suggested a number of ways in which management's production policy had a deleterious impact on the women worker's capacity to develop or maintain job controls, either in terms of the task or in terms of their relationships with each other. Now we can see that a free hand in this respect was the major part of the 'costs' accepted by the workers' representatives on their behalf.

For example, the movement of labour clause in the agreement was part of management's 'price' for union 'recognition' as sole bargaining agent for several thousand members on check-off. This substantive term of the agreement was management's demand, accepted as part of the quid pro quo of the 'collective' or more correctly 'jointly' constructed 'bargain' between management and the union officials in return for representation rights. Its effect was to enable management to pass down the 'problem' of flexibility onto the workers - they now bore the 'costs' of producing 'efficiently' in this manufacturing sphere. And we have already outlined the impact of this in terms of the undermining of workers' job controls and employment security.

Yet there are further implications to consider which were subsequent upon the (re-)distribution of the costs of production between management and the female workforce. Who, among the women workers was to bear them? The style of these negotiations was often recriminatory. The worker who was moved onto the absentee's job for example, felt victimised - she blamed the absentee - who had her own burden of domestic problems. As we can see, the solidarity of the workgroup was weakened as a result of the workers having to share out and bear the costs between themselves.

(What issue would you most like to take up?)

"Well, there's the movement of labour I would like to be able to sort out. But it's a contract that's been signed - and I can't do a damn thing about it. But it's something I don't think was for the working class, you know - the people itself - that it's dealing with. I mean that was definitely a management's.... It's good in one way. I mean it does keep the work flowing down the lines but, there again, I don't see why the people should have it - the strain put on THEIR shoulders, through other people not coming in. Surely that's a management's problem? That's what they're there for. Not the ordinary worker on the shopfloor or the union which - they are throwing it onto the working people - really, in their own way.

Well, it's like - if someone has got bad health or they've got a child like I have - I mean, so far, I've been pretty lucky, I haven't had to have too much time off with my little boy which..you never know what can happen in the future. Say they have got problems...Well - just imagine how the OTHER person's going to react to that person, when she comes back - after having time off and their life's been difficult! I mean, it's not good for relationships between people on the floor. And that to me is a management's problem and they should be dealing with that - NOT the worker. But yet they - if you know what I mean - they've got a sort of thing going for them, where the worker sorts it out for them. Because they've VICTIMISED the one that's been away; that other person, she's saying, 'Oh you should come bloody in more often!' you know, and things like this, which, to me, I think it's all wrong."

Edna (final assembly) (80)

Original emphasis u/c underlined, my emphasis l/c underlined

In another example, we can see that because the union machinery was rendered ineffective as a result of the agreement allowing management to discipline workers for poor performance, again the workers' frustration was turned inwards as a result of being unable to avoid having to bear the costs themselves, to destructive effect:

"like when I went in the other week with the warnings, it ended up a right babble. Nobody would sign their warnings (on the counts). They were a bit incensed. In fact it got quite bad, because one youngster - well, about my age - she was so incensed she went and shopped two women. She says, 'Warning me for counts', she says, 'And so and so's walking about all the while!' So then management-give me the names

and their machine numbers!' She said, 'I'll come back and give you their bloody machine numbers....' And THAT could have caused problems...." Emphasis in original Madge (Moulding shop) (81)

Overall, we would argue therefore, that the bargaining resources of the women workers were continuously being depleted as a consequence of bearing and re(distributing) management's 'costs', passed down through the medium of joint bargaining.

In addition, we would argue that the women workers bore these costs to a greater extent than the men. This was for two main reasons. On the one hand, structured by the sexual division of labour, the position of most of the women workers in the system of production was similar - in that they derived fewer bargaining resources from their position in the labour process in the first place, than the men. As we have seen in Part Two, as a consequence of management's production policy the scope of the women workers to develop job controls was consciously minimised to an extent that most of the men's was not. As a result the male workers were in a stronger position to defer costs passed on from management generally - away from themselves and onto (mainly) the women workers. (82) On the other hand, many of the costs were distributed unevenly in the first instance, bearing more heavily on the women workers from the start.

(Pulls out a copy of the blue book - the union/management agreement).

"WELL, this is loaded, you know - for the management. And, there's an agreement between the union and management on what they call performance - that's you know, how hard we work - the level of performance - our output. Now if a woman doesn't REACH this required output - they have her up to office and they say: 'You're not working hard enough!' And outside there, there's a bloke (maintenance) with a white

coat on - that's sat there 8 hours a day, and  
all he does is chat the girls up! And they've  
got women in there, and they're threatening  
them with suspension and....all manner of things,  
you know - because they're not working hard enough!

Sally (sub assembly) (83)

Original emphasis upper case underlined

# HANDLING PROBLEMS THROUGH THE UNION

## Footnotes

- (1) Stage 7 involved resort to ACAS. This was never used where decisions of any significance were involved, i.e. that would set a precedent. Occasionally, where it was known the members' demands would be 'disallowed', negotiators on both sides were prepared to let somebody else pronounce the refusal.
- (2) It includes an account of an "informal chat" between the officials and the chairman "to sort out a few problems" before the regional officer went on holiday.
- (3) Ref JA 17/52 : 684-700
- (4) Ref EC 15/53 : 110-163.
- (5) Ref EC16.
- (6) Items the women stewards mentioned they had raised at this meeting were: supervisors labouring, the problems of new starters and lack of training ("I've brought that up....and I noticed, on the last agenda, they hadn't brought that up to John.. (JA18)), absenteeism, and bad parts on assembly lines ("but they haven't been dealt with....they always come again (BB10)).
- (7) Ref MC 11/S1 : 22-32.
- (8) Items arising from the shopstewards' meeting are put on the agenda for negotiation with management.  
Joint works committee meeting Old Hill February 1977, subjects covered:

Toilets:	Bolts on doors.
Canteen:	Meals at Portersfield arrive cold.
Ventilation	
Congestion:	Re-siting clocks
	Cartons in gangways.
Carpark:	Security.
	Cover for motorbikes.
Redecorating:	Need for.
*Canteen:	Meals in machine shop - choice of sweet.
	Meals in machines.
Production machinery:	Constant breakdown of WallTex machine in the machine shop.
Leaking roof:	
Assembly-line track:	Repairs.
Congestion:	Blocked gangways.
	Lack of space between lines.

\*"Mrs Wood then produced the bacon sandwich which she had received at breakfast time. Mr. Turvey agreed that the bacon was not up to the usual standard and said he would look into the matter".



(9) Ref EW 21/S3 : 115-120.

(10) A male serviceman representing women in the moulding shop gave "the supply of materials and shortage of containers" as the most common problem he was involved with. It was, of course, part of his job as a labourer to supply these.

(11) E.g.:Extraction fans in the paint shop (KA)  
Extraction fans on welding machines (SH22)  
Extraction system for silk-screen printing (SB13)\*  
Oil cleaned off the floor in the moulding shop (MB24).

\*Silk-screen printing: Getting extraction fans

"Where I work, it's a very, very big room, you see. So it didn't affect me, but it affected the girls that worked around. And we had hell of a fight! 12 months it took me - to get that job shifted. And he still didn't....he didn't wanna know what I was telling him, about the girls that worked on this particular job - that you had to use this aerosol spray, you know. And, these girls, they'd got nausea, sore throats, headaches, tiredness. They used to go home on a Friday, and they'd still got the taste in their throat on a SUNDAY, you know.... Some had rashes.....And, finally, it took the girls.... they had to down tools you see, before he really.... It really opened his eyes.

We had a health and safety meeting, and this was on the agenda, and I was telling them all about these girls - what they were going through. And he said, 'Right!' he said, 'We'll have one of these girls up'. I suppose, I think he thought, that seeing the Managing Director there, she was gonna quiver and go to pieces, and say, you know, 'Nothing's wrong with me, I'm alright'. But she didn't - I was proud of her - I'd got me fingers crossed under the table, you know! So he said, 'O.K.' he said, 'We'll have the doctor in to examine you'.

The doctor came in, he examined all the girls, and he recommended that the job be moved to a more ventilated area. He recommended that the aerosol spray, had not got to be used any more....It wasn't HARMFUL, you know - he said that they wouldn't DIE or anything. But it was very, very....you know, it was very....bad. It was unpleasant, it was very unpleasant for them....

They moved the job, they put a ventilator system in - that draws it from underneath... They've even had new MACHINERY at £1,000 each. So, why didn't they do that in the first place? It took us 12 months of shouting and screaming and banging tables.... Well, not literally, but it took us 12 months of trying to tell him, what was happening to those girls."

Sally (sub assembly). Ref SB13

- (12) Ref SB 23-24/S3 : 9-24.
- (13) Ref PW 43/S4 : 247-263
- (14) Ref KA 56/S1 : 210-221
- (15) Ref MB 32-33/S3 : 800-856 and M13 18/S2 : 450-490 and MB 20/S2 : 569.
- (16) Ref PL10
- (17) Instead she had tried to encourage the younger girls to prove their slower speed had not been due, as management maintained, to the fact that "they talked and didn't work properly as a team".
- (18) Ref PL10-11
- (19) Ref JG 24/S2 : 314-347.
- (20) Ref EW 8/S1 : 471-473
- (21) Ref BB10/S1 : 585-595.
- (22) Ref JG 25/S2 : 356-378.
- (23) Ref PB35/S5 : 799-819
- (24) Ref PW 32/S3 : 600-630.
- (25) Ref NB9.
- (26) Ref SB23/S2 : 873-931.
- (27) Ref MB 35/S4 : 60-91.
- (28) Ref PW44-45/S4 : 383-411.
- (29) Ref KA23-25/S2 : 217-268.
- (30) Ref PL12.
- (31) Ref LG8/S2 : 80-86.

- (32) Ref SB24/S3 : 22-58.
- (33) Ref SB27/S3 : 214-236.
- (34) Ref PW31/S3 : 528-550.
- (35) Ref SB21/S2 : 725-747.
- (36) Ref SB20/S2 : 687-708.
- (37) Ref NB20-21/S2 : 1042 - 53:88.
- (38) Ref PW44.
- (39) Ref JA38-39/S4 : 712-760.
- (40) Ref EW9/S1 : 562-572 and EW15/S2 : 266-280.
- (41) Ref JA21(b)/S 330-54.
- (42) Ref PW36/S3 : 847-950.
- (43) Ref PW
- (44) Ref KA33/S2 : 712-740.
- (45) Ref JA 36(a)/S4 : 365.
- (46) Ref JA39/S4 : 750-760.
- (47) Ref JW15.
- (48) Ref EW9/S1 : 560-572 and EW 16/S : 600-640.
- (49) Ref OHT1/S2 : 00-24.
- (50) Ref PW51/S4 : 703-710.
- (51) Ref EW 14/52 : 166-195.
- (52) Ref JA17/S2 : 684-746.
- (53) Ref EW16.
- (54) Richard Herding refers to grievances being 'traded by officials as part of the process of maintaining bargaining relationships with management. Management likewise make decisions to: concede, pursue, stick on or let drop issues in a strategic fashion - which reflects as much as it maintains or changes the current 'state of play' in bargaining power relationships. See Herding (1972).

- (55) Ref OHT3/22 : 160-170.
- (56) Ref BB13/S1 : 751-814.
- (57) Ref JA.
- (58) Ref EW15/S2 : 390-468.
- (59) Ref SH17.
- (60) Ref TS12/S3 : 97-120.
- (61) Ref JS12/S2 : 650-
- (62) The ineffectiveness of grievance procedures as a means of workers initiating changes in the workplace and its far more limited use in this respect than as a defensive measure is discussed in Beynon (1973) and Herdin (1972).
- (63) Ref BW2/S1 : 40-47.
- (64) Ref BW10/S1 : 313-329.
- (65) Ref JW11/S2 : 450-479.
- (66) Ref EW16/S2 : 599-624.
- (67) Ref BW2/S1 : 40.
- (68) Ref PB22-23/S4 : 158-200.
- (69) Ref PB34/S5 : 636-708.
- (70) Ref PB21-22/S4 : 70-84.
- (71) Ref EW15/S2 : 320-356.
- (72) Ref OH5/TI : S2:24-30.
- (73) Ref JW10/S2 : 416-420.
- (74) No data is available but the branch secretary complained that the turnover was very high.
- (75) Probably to an even greater extent than they had been before the agreement. Pic explained how the labour exchange had withdrawn its facility of referral from about the time it was drawn up.  
  
"Four years ago, just after redundancies, they used to advertise at the labour exchange. Someone went after a job and asked for work at BSR. The official told the woman - she'd have to go and enquire herself because they no longer had dealings with BSR. Because they'd sent so many people there and they were out again

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in less than a month - they finished the service. The labour exchange got tired of sending people here and after a month they got the sack."

Pip (sub assembly). Ref PW31/S3 : 571-595.

(76) Ref TS4-6/S1 : 420-520.

(77) Ref JG18/S2 : 16-40.

(78) Ref EC30-31/S4 : 585-700.

(79) Ref EW13/S2 : 1-60.

(80) Ref EW17/52 : 690-757.

(81) Ref MB32/S3 : 710-744.

(82) See, e.g. the instance of work intensification and the servicemen cited in Chapter 4.

(83) Ref SB8/S1 : 638-664.

CHAPTER 13 UNEQUAL PAY NEGOTIATIONS 1973-1978

"So in actual fact, you see - in theory they  
got equal pay, but in practice they didn't."  
Gordon (storeman) (1)

We have argued that the impact the union's bargaining policy, concentrating on the distribution of surplus value rather than its rate of extraction, had (and has) particularly serious implications for women workers. This is because, as a result of their weaker position in the labour market and the sexual division of labour both within and between firms, women are recruited into those areas where the rate of exploitation is highest. At the same time, women are likely to benefit least from the distribution of 'reward' through collective bargaining. Where they predominate - in the secondary sectors of employment - there may be less surplus to be distributed and/or others (i.e. males) with greater bargaining power, having necessary experience/skills or occupying key positions in the labour process, reap a greater part of the reward. (2)

At BSR we have pointed out a particular form of relationship pertaining between male and female workers termed 'co-exploitation', whereby most of the men, as a result of their position in the labour process in relation to the women workers, derived a direct interest in the rate of exploitation of the latter - whose effort, in this labour intensive system of production was largely responsible for the size of the surplus. And as we shall go on to show, these males did also consistently reap a ~~greater~~ share of the total part of the reward accruing to labour.

In this Chapter we analyse the pattern of distribution of benefit or reward, as averse to cost, through collective bargaining. We proceed by examining the contents of agreements concluded as a result of pay negotiations conducted at BSR between 1973 and 1978. However,

we also look at the minutes of branch meetings (where available) at which the main elements of the annual wage claim were discussed and the negotiating team put together. This is because we are arguing that the process of collective bargaining extends well beyond the meeting with management. Both beforehand, and afterwards, groups of workers are engaged in negotiating the distribution of costs and benefits with each other. In the main body of this Chapter, however, our focus is less on the mechanics of this process than with its results. We are examining the outcome of these inter and intra - organisational negotiations over the distribution of reward - as this was embodied each year in the annual pay agreement.

In the conclusions we begin to take up a discussion of the process of collective bargaining, concentrating on negotiations which take place 'internally' i.e. between different groups of workers, in order to explain the outcome of patterns of distribution already described. Our analysis of one case study here, points forward to an investigation pursued in the following Chapters of important elements distinguishing the bargaining position, resources and relationships of the men and women workers. One of the main questions we are concerned to explore is: what are the implications for the women members of the (unequal) bargaining strength of the males?

First, however, we need to describe the outcome of wage bargaining with management, as this was expressed in the final pay settlements. And we need to note that, apart from the existence of Equal Pay Legislation, pay bargaining in the period 1973-1978 was, to a highly significant extent, governed by various incomes policies. So some of the implications of this for the bargaining process and its outcome, should, perhaps, be mentioned first.



The Context : Incomes Policies 1978-1978

During this period (1973-1978), for which some records relating to pay negotiations at BSR still exist, wage bargaining at company level was strongly circumscribed. First, by the statutory incomes policy of the Conservative government (1972-4) and secondly the TUC and Labour government's Social Contract (July 1975 - July 1977) and stage three (1978-9). (3) The annual wage negotiations which took place in June were, accordingly, limited by the currently prevailing 'norms' or 'guidelines' relevant to each phase or stage of incomes policy in these years.

Apart from the fact that pay negotiations were thus fairly closely specified, there were other broad features characterising the period which had an impact on wage negotiations at company level. Three which appear to have been particularly relevant for the collective bargaining process at BSR, were: the compression of differentials, the increased use of 'external' agencies in wage settlements and changes in the content of 'formal' negotiations.

THE COMPRESSION OF PAY DIFFERENTIALS

At a general level, compression of pay differentials occurred on at least two axes between 1970 and 1976. On the one hand, there was a (temporary) closing of the overall differential between men and women's earnings which occurred as a result of the Equal Pay Act. And, on the other hand, some compression of pay relativities occurred between grades in particular industries, notably engineering. (4) Whether this was directly attributable to incomes policies or not, such consciousness increasingly fuelled sectional demands from, for example, higher paid (white, male, skilled) groups in these industries especially. (5)

In the Midlands, from 1975, union officials generally were put under pressure from strong sections of the membership more and more opposed to their unions' continuing observance of the social contract. Nationwide this build-up of frustration eventually forced changes in TUC policy, but not before sections, such as the male skilled at BSR and separately groups of the semi-skilled too ("We're not taking home much more than the women....") had shown themselves prepared to take matters into their own hands. Ironically it was BSR's female manual workers, believed to be the least dissatisfied - in terms of pay policy in general and their own wages in particular - who staged the most dramatic protest at this time, with a mass, 'unofficial', strike affecting all four West Midlands factories in March 1977.

Broadly, therefore, the impact of Pay Policy on bargaining relationships at BSR could be seen in a marked frustration, which was expressed in two main ways. First, a strongly critical view of the union became general amongst the membership as a result of the officials' insistence on their adhering to a wage-bargaining policy which stoically ignored the fact that the company was making record profits (they doubled twice in this period: once between 1971 and 1973, and again between 1974 and 1976) while the workers' living standards were not even being maintained.(6) Secondly, the period seemed to be more dominated than usual by sectional claims put forward by small groups of male workers who found themselves better placed than most to demand 'special treatment' from their union officials as well as from management.

#### THE USE OF EXTERNAL AGENCIES

Another general feature of pay bargaining under incomes policy which had a visible impact on bargaining relationships at BSR concerned the growing use of 'external agencies'.

Hugh Clegg notes two structural features of the trade union movement characteristic of this period. One was the growing centrality of workplace organisation in trade unions (coupled with a general shift to plant-wide pay agreements) and the other was the "notable..... increase in the status and authority of congress and it's general council" at this time.(7) More than this though, the actual administration of the social contract brought these two levels into direct relation to each other in a quite distinctive way.

The TUC, eschewing the statutory approach and machinery of the conservative government, had taken on a voluntary 'vetting' and guidance role for union negotiators. The Department of Employment too, had set up an advisory service for both sides. As pressure on the negotiators at BSR grew, there was increasing resort to both of these bodies by the union officials (in the case of visits to the Department of Employment, jointly with management) for "rulings" on the (un)feasibility of general or sectional claims put forward by the workforce.

It is not surprising to find that, as a consequence, the focus of bargaining pressure became rather remote and diffuse from the workers' point of view: it was also uncertain. This was because the level of decision-making itself became the subject of negotiation between the officials and management. They now had the choice whether to 'allow' the decision to be seen to be made by an outside body and to adopt 'merely a mediating role' themselves or whether to (and how long to) keep matters in their own hands. The appropriate focus of

pressure within the union structure itself became similarly problematic from the members' point of view, with an increasing number of direct appeals being made from the shopfloor to the regional and/or the national General Secretaries.

While, clearly, it was convenient for negotiators on both sides to manipulate these different levels of decision-making, there remained a danger that an overplayed 'mediating' stance would encourage the membership to by-pass them (e.g. by appealing directly to the Department of Employment or ACAS themselves). On the occasions when this did happen the union's negotiating officer denounced the groups and the stewards involved in the strongest terms. (8) (Those who tried a direct approach to the regional office were simply turned away).

The overall effect of referring to outside agencies for 'definite advice' on bargaining issues could, therefore, be seen at every level of negotiation. On the whole there seemed to be more at risk in doing so from the workers' point of view: since one consequence of submitting those claims judged to fall outside pay policy to administrative decision, was that they then gained an 'illegal' and officially designated 'non-negotiable' status. And this tended to sap further support for pursuing the case. Indeed under pay policy, the process of negotiating the status (legal' or 'illegal') of any claim had to be added on to that of negotiating the claim itself.

This leads to the third feature of bargaining under pay policy - the changes in content or issues taken up at every level of the process.

#### THE CONTENT OF FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS

An early policy decision on the union side, in response to restricted wage bargaining, was to instruct officials to look for improvements in so-called 'fringe benefits'. (After all, the organisation still had to 'deliver' some 'goods' in order to retain credibility). Consequently, the question of sick pay, bereavement and pensions had been raised with BSR management as early as 1972. Since none of these was implemented until 1977-8 however, it is difficult to judge how seriously they were being discussed.

It was only as a result of the explosive 'bonus dispute' which signified widespread dissatisfaction with the union especially, that the schemes were brought toward completion. And it could be argued that by this time the union side was certainly in need of some bargaining successes. But the overall effect was rather bizarre - with, so it seemed, strident pressure from the membership for one set of demands being met by consistent negotiation across the bargaining table, on quite another.

#### 1973

"By the time the majority of employers took action (to implement equal pay) from 1973 to 1975, they could see that it was possible under the legislation to reduce their responsibilities under the Act without breaking the law, or to opt for methods of implementation which kept increases paid to women to a minimum."

Snell et al (1981) P.63

The Equal Pay Act was passed in 1970, but was only brought into force at the end of 1975 along with the Sex Discrimination Act. In the meantime, employers had been advised to bring their pay structures into line with the Act's requirements by stages. (9) The process was extremely slow. Most employers seem to have left implementation until the last moment and to have used the run-in period for reorganising

jobs and pay grades so as to minimise possible equal pay claims and costs. (10) The period was also covered by the Conservative government's statutory incomes policy which included a total pay freeze from November 1972 until March 1973. Under stage II following this, equal pay rises were permitted outside the limit of £1 + 4%, such that the percentage differential between men and women might be closed by up to one third by the end of 1973 (11).

Neither the management nor the union side at BSR seems to have made use of this opportunity, as no equal pay increments were negotiated until June the following year. The semi-skilled women, therefore, continued to receive for a further twelve months, basic rates which produced minimum earnings levels some 20% lower than their male counterparts. (12) (The differential in terms of actual earnings would, of course, have been considerably greater than this).

1974

"The women all gave up some of their rise to the men - well there were so many of them it meant another couple of pounds for the skilled."

Mary (branch secretary) (13)

Negotiations for the annual claim in June 1974 were carried out under stage III, the most complicated phase of the Conservative government's incomes policy. The principle of 'kitty bargaining' - where a total sum was made available for division - was continued, and a general ceiling on pay was set at 7% (excluding overtime) or alternatively £2.25 per person. A further 1% of the "group pay bill" was also allowed for reducing anomalies or "obstacles to the effective use of manpower". And once again, equal pay increments remained outside pay policy restriction.

During the autumn and winter of 1973-4 minutes of the branch and its newly formed branch committee record the male workers' dissatisfaction with pay(14). Their general frustration is indicated, for example, by a proposal put before the latter body in March 1974, that a separate branch meeting be held for the male workers alone.(15) And another proposal that more male shopstewards should take part in the pay talks. It was decided to extend the negotiating team to seven. (The principle that different groups of men should have separate representation in negotiations had long been established - for example, in relation to the skilled grades). Meanwhile, specific groups of male workers were pressing forward separate claims.

Among the skilled men, it was the maintenance workers who had taken the lead. Representatives from all three factories had held a separate meeting (i.e. outside the branch) with the two full-time officers to discuss their own claim. As a result, a letter had been sent to the company in the New Year proposing a maintenance agreement and new wages structure for this particular group. The new branch committee ratified this course of action after the event, and it was not reported at the branch.

The male, semi-skilled 'indirect' workers, on the other hand, lacked both the tradition and basis for separate organisation. They were a much more dispersed and heterogeneous group, comprising, for example, warehouse checkers, stores and servicemen, and they had been voicing their dissatisfaction with their low earning levels consistently at the branch but, to little avail. Since they had fewer opportunities than the production workers to boost their wages with bonus pay, their interest lay in raising basic rates. But given the imminence of equal

pay comparisons, the company were naturally concerned to hold basic rates down for as long as possible. At this particular moment therefore, this group of male workers threatened to become troublesome, particularly once 'equalisation' linked their vote on the wage claim with the women's. For the men would then have little to lose, in encouraging the latter to stand out with them - for the kind of increases the company was always going to be far happier paying to 800 men than 8000 women. Accordingly, when the demands of this group of men were presented in such a way as to leave the basic rates undisturbed they certainly found a more sympathetic response from the company than might otherwise have been expected. Specifically, what this group was asking for was the £1 lieu bonus, which was already paid to the skilled men, to be extended to the male semi-skilled - as part of the annual wage claim.

In fact, this claim was conceded in March 1974 i.e. prior to the annual settlement in June. And it was even back-dated to November 1973! It would appear this was part of a 'deal': the semi-skilled men would stay quiet for the annual wage claim (set in train from April) and, consequently, increase the likelihood that the women would accept a minimal wage settlement (in terms of its impact on basic rates). (16) And this offer would appear better than it was from the women's point of view, because of the inclusion, for the first time, of an 'equal pay increment'.

Although the final wage award was extremely complex, the pattern of distribution was quite plain (17). It favoured the men. And this despite the fact that the women received, on top of their basic £2.25, an additional payment of £2.68 towards equal pay. (18) Even when this extra sum is included, it still remained the case that the



women, who comprised 77% of the labour force, only received 75% of the total wage award including equal pay'. If the equal pay increment is taken out of the reckoning altogether, only 58% of the net award went to the three-quarters of the workforce who were female. Male workers, comprising just 23% of the labour force received 42% of the final settlement (19).

These facts are the more remarkable, given that this was a period of pay policy more strictly specified than any other before. And all BSR's workers, male and female (bar the 400 skilled) were due to receive the flat £2.25 allowed! Where, then, did the extra money the males received come from?

In the first place, the whole of the 1% of the wage bill allowed for 'flexibility' was allocated for distribution to the male section of the workforce, less the amount used for restructuring certain grades. And as it happened the grades restructured were all male too. Including one, inspection, which had been deliberately constructed to avoid equal pay comparisons.(20) In the second place, a re-distribution was arranged which took away some of the women's award and gave it to the men. Thus 4,338 adult women 'gave' 6 pence of the £2.25 rise which was due to them, to the men, contributing a total sum which was almost matched by the 262 junior females. Their 'donation' amounted to almost £1 each!

Nor was the sum thus acquired (plus that from the 1% 'flexibility' allowance) distributed equally among the men. Just over half of it went to the 400 skilled workers who received, in consequence, double the basic award, which they (and everyone else) were due. 800 semi-skilled males shared the remainder, with the 500 male indirect workers getting twice as much as the 300 bonus workers on direct production.

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons the women workers allowed this internal redistribution to proceed, was the fact that their equal pay increment produced a relatively large wage rise at the time. And, if the implementation of 'equal pay' had taken a step back, it was soon due to take another one, because management had also agreed to renegotiate male rates only, at the end of the year.

Accordingly, a male wage claim and matching negotiating committee was put together the following November. Their demands included the consolidation of threshold payments into the basic rates (so that they would be reflected in shift and overtime premiums). And average earnings for holidays (shift and overtime workers again the most affected). Apart from the three convenors and two full-time officials, the negotiating team included one skilled and one semi-skilled male from each of the three factories plus one (skilled) representative from the outlying Portersfield toolroom. (It is worth noting that under this scheme, the skilled men as a whole were over-represented by more than 2:1 in relation to the semi-skilled males).

Consideration of the male wage claim was delayed until February 1975 however, because during December the company commenced short-time working (five days for males and three days for females) prior to the announcement of redundancies in the new year. In the event, the company agreed to consolidate the £4.40 threshold payment into the males' basic (19) rates. And for one particular section - semi-skilled production workers in the autoshop - to consolidate a part of their bonus earnings as well, to enhance the basic rate further. They agreed to consider consolidating the previously conceded £1 lieu bonus for indirect males and to allow the men to renegotiate in June. (But they did not concede average earnings for holiday pay, which continued to be paid on basic rates).

1975

"We got the £2.00. Then he offered £1 and we pushed to £1.50. We promised we'd not use this towards equal pay. That was only fair."  
Paul (union official) (21)

In contrast to the complex final stage of the Conservative government's pay policy, Labour instituted the TUC's proposal in 1975, of limiting pay rises to £6 per week for all full-time adult workers earning less than £8500 per annum. (22) The only exceptions allowed were equal pay increments for women. But these limits were not made operative in relation to BSR's annual wage settlement until the latter half of the 1975-6 'stage' i.e. not until the following year.

Meanwhile, the issue of equal pay had been raised at the March 1975 branch meeting and the officials announced that it should be attained in June. In April the demand was incorporated into the branch's proposals for the wage claim, which included: £15 across the board, average earnings for holidays, a sick pay and pensions scheme, a reduction in the working week and extra holidays, further discussion of threshold payments and consolidation of the lieu bonus plus a request of up-grading for Progress chasers (men). The skilled men asked if they could negotiate their own claim separately - they had not, apparently, succeeded in negotiating a satisfactory agreement on the last occasion. Women asked again for the introduction of job evaluation to ascertain their rates under equal pay, but the officials were against the idea. (23)

The company offered increases in basic rates ranging from £5.50 for skilled men, £4.26 for semi-skilled men and £3.92 for women, plus an additional £1.13 here to "achieve" equal pay. The 'non-discriminatory'

basic rate apparently aimed for, (now designated the rate for 'general assembly') seems to have been pitched somewhere between the males' unskilled and semi-skilled rates.

The company's next offer reflected pressure from the male workers (particularly the skilled) plus an admission that some further increment was due to the women, if the firm was to comply with the Equal Pay Act by the end of the year. Accordingly, the men were again allowed a wage 'review' in December and the women were awarded a further £2.71 to be paid from the 1st January, 1976. This was to be the "only amount paid to females, i.e. no other amount to be paid as a result of that review." (24) The agreement stated further that:

"If any amount is paid to males as a result of the December review, this will be paid in such a manner as will not enable further claims for women under the Equal Pay Act." (25)

In addition £1 was given to maintenance fitters and electricians, on the understanding that no other groups would put forward further differential claims. But these 'improvements' did little to satisfy the male workers.

They did better out of the final offer, which was accepted by ballot. (26) This stipulated that all male grades would now have an extra £2 lieu bonus, on condition that no claim would be submitted under the Equal Pay Act and the men would not subsequently seek its consolidation into their basic rates. (27) Ultimately, this annual award, wherein the BSR women were supposed to achieve equal pay looked like this.

	Increase in Basic Rate	Lieu bonus (Males)	Equal pay increment (Females)	Shift Workers' increase through premiums	Total
Skilled males	5.50	2.00 (+1.00*)	Nil	1.83 (+1.33*)	9.33 (11.66*)
Semi-skilled males	4.26	2.00	Nil	1.42	7.68
Females	3.92	Nil	1.13	Nil	5.05
*maintenance and electricians only)					(up to 7.76 at 1.1.76)

Considerable frustration must have remained among the male workers as a result of their meagre awards during the first relatively free period of collective bargaining experienced for some years. The women workers had gained more substantial rises as a result of their equal pay increments, but the continued lack of equality in practice, epitomised by the men's £2 lieu bonus and attached 'no-equality clause', clearly engendered frustration (and confusion) within their ranks as well. (28)

This would have been much compounded when the men, once again, returned to the bargaining table in December 1975. As it was probably at this point that a further £1.50 supplement to the lieu bonus was negotiated for all male day-workers, again on condition it would not be generalised to the women because of equal pay. This bonus was 'in lieu of' the extra money accruing to shift-men as a result of increases in basic rates being multiplied by their shift premium.

1976

"We got the £1.50 and the back pay because the girls took the action. But not the £2.00 the men got".

Paul (union official) (29)

When the wage claim for 1976 was discussed by the branch early in that year, it appeared there was little which could be achieved beyond the flat £6 allowed under stage 1 of the social contract (1975-6). The main demand of the male workers for average earnings, including shift allowance, for holiday pay, had therefore to be held in abeyance "until incomes policy allows". In the first week of April a strike broke out among the women at the Old Hill factory - which was almost a riot:

"The wage agreement was accepted by ballot (in June 1975). But they found out about part of the lieu bonus (the £1.50 awarded to male

day-workers in December 1975) and there was a strike at Old Hill.

We sat, the convenor, me and the shopstewards, getting abused. And we said we couldn't negotiate, it had been accepted by them. It was terrifying! They got a chap by the legs and they were dangling him over the staircase. The afternoon shift came on, and they were told there was no strike and to work normally. But these kids went around, whipping the chairs out from under them, as they sat to work on the lines. We wouldn't negotiate until they calmed down. I told them they couldn't have it.

We met the company, they wanted to see what would happen. I told them they should get the police, someone was going to get killed! The company wouldn't though. Ferguson, the chairman was there. We told him we weren't going to break that agreement. Then he called us in - 'Come on, we're not messing about any longer!' He let us down! Never again - no agreement will be worth the paper it was written on. Another day and it would have been OK. Then they wanted it back-dated! But he wouldn't - then he had to.

The convenor at Waterfall Lane said, on principle, she wouldn't take the money; they weren't entitled to it!

This month he'd have said - sack the lot! But it was the time - production was all he was interested in then."

Mary (branch secretary) (30)

The women's success spurred on the shift-men, whose demand for the £1.50 lieu bonus as well was included in the annual wage claim at the April branch meeting. (31) At this meeting also, a request was made for the extension to women, of the £2 lieu-bonus given to the males in the previous year. But the officials refused to take this up at all, on the grounds that this bonus was part of the 1975 wage deal which the female members had voted to accept, and in doing so they had also "accepted" that the £2.00 would be excluded from a claim for equal pay (32). At the same meeting, we might also observe:

"It was agreed that union contributions should be increased from 18 pence to 25 pence as soon as possible, as 'Equal Pay' had now been achieved."

The 1976 wage negotiations, in accordance with union policy to support the social contract and wage restraint, produced a £6 flat-rate supplement paid to all grades. Nevertheless, for women workers at BSR, as elsewhere in the country, this increase constituted the largest single award they had ever received.

1977

"Under no circumstances will phase two of the Government's legislation be accepted".

With their wage negotiations in June, BSR found itself at the tailend of each stage of the social contract. From August 1976, awards were to be limited to a 5% increase, with cut-off points at each end of £2.50 and £4. If this was negotiated in June 1977 it would have to run for a full year - even if the limits were relaxed two months later. And, given the build-up of pressure against continued restraint in the union movement as a whole (reflected in many of the 1976 conferences), this possibility seemed likely. On top of this, the company had announced record profits in 1976: out of £28½ million, they could afford to pay more.

Workers at BSR began to register an intention not to be bound by the stage two award for twelve months, early in the year. And a discussion between some male workers and the branch secretary in February revealed two different approaches to the question. The men proposed that the union side should refuse to negotiate with the company in June, and wait until August to see what the new terms might be. The union officials, mindful of their leadership's commitment to

uphold the social contract, favoured going into negotiation in June under stage two - with a proviso that they would return to the negotiating table "as soon as pay policy allowed". While the motion to the branch in February reflected the latter course of action, it did not reflect the intentions of its proposers. (33) The struggle to define branch policy in the direction desired by each group lasted a further, confusing, nine months.

In May, the company asked for a meeting to discuss the forthcoming wage negotiations. Conscious of the need to clarify the situation, the regional official raised the issue at the branch committee meeting. His arguments were to accept the stage two award in June and reopen negotiations after July 31st when this phase was due to end. In his view, the risk of deferring negotiations lay in perhaps losing the award altogether "like when Heath came in, in 1974". Arguments against this were put forward by two male toolroom workers. As they saw it, settlement under stage two meant accepting the "twelve month rule" and they were happier to take on the company than the government. (And behind this was an implicit question: would the union support them if they did attempt to renegotiate after July 31st?) The vote on the committee went 4:6 against the officials' proposal to settle in June, albeit with a stated intention to return. But it was still unclear what the committee's policy might be instead - beyond their own stated intention not to negotiate at all until further guidelines (on the next stage of incomes policy) were available.

At this meeting, and at the meeting of joint shopstewards held subsequently (which confirmed the committee's decision "to await further guidelines" again, against the recommendation of their officials), the regional officer set forward his wage bargaining aims. These were a need firstly to "do something about differentials" for the skilled



men; and secondly, to improve the incentive element in the piecework scheme for the women in the hopes it would lift their 'spontaneously' falling performances. In order to appease the disaffected males, he also proposed widening the negotiating team of 7 - 4 convenors (for the first time, all female) plus 3 elected - to 12: "to include all skills" (specifically, more skilled men) "like we did in 1974".

There was confusion at the branch meeting held subsequently. No-one had written down the branch committee's proposal - and the officials were nervous because almost the entire evening shift of men in the auto-shop had clocked out in order to attend:

"We've been in the dark....and we were concerned.  
We were under the impression you were going to  
accept stage 2, so we came down to vote it out...."

But a proposal from the floor to accept the recommendation of the branch committee and joint shopstewards "not to accept phase 2 but to wait for guidelines on phase 3, before starting negotiations" was overwhelmingly carried.

A few worried comments from some of the female stewards at the end, testified to the fact that no-one - outside certain groups of the men - had really discussed this issue or informed the women workers about it: would they accept the decision and forgo the rise? What if the company put it in their paypackets anyway? The women would spend it. And as long as the officials kept saying they might lose it altogether, the women were bound to say: "let's take what we can get!"

The branch secretary regretted not writing down the decision of the branch committee - she was sure it said negotiations on phase 2 would be "held in abeyance". But now the proposal stated clearly that stage two would not be accepted and there was no more juggling that could be done. The proposal was put to the company with a demand for the eventual settlement to be backdated: this however, the employers refused. (34)

The government and the TUC were keeping quiet about their future plans - there was a possibility that the matter might drag on into the autumn. With the risk of having more to lose, the lack of previous consultation among the female membership loomed an even larger problem. If the majority of the women accepted or demanded a June settlement, the men would fail. While this would have rescued the union officials from adherence to a mandate they could not see their way to support, their feelings were contradictory. Such a split carried the possibly greater danger of an attempt by the disaffected skilled men to break away from the union and 'go it alone'. The memory of Pilkingtons still loomed large.

Some basic questions concerning democracy and decision making in the branch were therefore raised:

"The women won't accept the vote at branch.  
The men won't accept the vote of the floor." (35)

How was the dilemma to be resolved?

In the days of separate ballots recording refusal or acceptance of the company's final offer following wage negotiations, the majority of the women accepting always outnumbered the majority of the men who refused - much to the latter's contempt. But then the case for refusing never really had to be made, because the men were always allowed to go back and negotiate separately. Now, for the first time, the men who had pushed through their decision had to consider how to make out their case, albeit after the event, to the majority of the women workers (who had not been party to the long series of discussions which had undoubtedly gone on in toolroom and machine shop over the past few months).

It was decided to put out a circular from branch office to inform the whole membership.

A WAGE INCREASE IS DUE FROM JUNE 1ST 1977 UNDER STAGE II OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT. THE BRANCH COMMITTEE AND SHOPSTEWARDS RECOMMENDED THAT WE DO NOT ACCEPT THIS RISE OF £2.50 AND PRO-RATA FOR PART-TIMERS, UNTIL WE HAVE MORE INFORMATION ON WHAT IS TO HAPPEN ON WAGES FROM JULY 31ST WHEN STAGE II ENDS. WHEN WE SETTLE WE WOULD WANT IT BACKDATED FROM JUNE 1ST.

The interests of the officials were again reflected in the wording of this, which gave the impression of postponement rather than refusal. But this was to no avail. Ultimately, the officials had to withdraw from any obvious association with the wage negotiations because the company "broke" the social contract by agreeing to an increase of 10%; in effect, skipping stage 2 (5%) and following the stage 3 guidelines instead. (36)

#### 1978

"Really, from our idea - everyone, as I see it - gained."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor)

Stage three of the Labour Government's incomes policy comprised a 10% pay limit, the option to introduce self-financing productivity deals (on top of the 10%) if "further flexibility" was required, and continued observance of the twelve-month rule. There was also provision for maintaining or restoring differentials - variations being permitted within the overall pay limit for the negotiating group. Because stage 2 had been passed over, this had, in fact, comprised the basic framework of the 1977 wage negotiations at BSR. It still remained operative therefore for the following series of negotiations in June 1978 as well.

The final settlement of this year reflected the much increased militancy of the skilled men which had been building up throughout the previous twelve months. It also reflected an anxiety on the part of both the union's paid officials and the company to appease them - eased by the firm's continuing prosperity. Profits in 1977 still registered over £20 million.

The bargaining aims set out by the regional official in the previous year were largely fulfilled in 1978. The negotiating team was again widened "to include representatives from all skill groups". With a new and additional category now inserted above the "semi-skilled" and "skilled", namely, "craftsmen". The highest paid male workers were, therefore, substantially over-represented.

The company was looking for higher productivity and the union-side for more money. Besides asking for an overall increase, again, of 10%, it was argued that the other two main planks of their wage claim - to improve differentials and increase the incentive element in piecework pay - were necessary to increase both pay and efficiency. (A specific aim was to speed up the final assembly-lines).

Looking at the final settlement, therefore, we can note straight away that the two aspects of most relevance to the women workers, both depended on a higher work-rate. First, the bonus element in the piecework system was increased, but on a curved basis. For performances up to 100 it remained at the original price of 12½p per point. Pay for performances between 100 and 105 was increased by 1p per point and 2p on the final assembly lines. Pay for performances over 105 was increased to 16½p per point. (Hardly any production areas could achieve this and none of the final assembly lines). Secondly,

it was agreed to implement the productivity scheme which had been instituted the previous year: it would now go 'live'. The pay-out from this (distributed on a percentage basis) was also dependent upon final output levels. (37)

It seems that neither of these two aspects of the wage agreement particularly reflected the wishes of the female membership.

"The increase which was negotiated - increasing the payment per point over 100 performance - doesn't amount to anything in reality. They've just wrapped it up in a good parcel. The younger girls on the lines think it's OK, but the older women upstairs are more sensible and realise the scheme is not good enough - we want a better paying scheme altogether."

Elizabeth (machine shop) (38)

But even the younger girls on the lines were not very impressed:

"Pay's been increased for performances over 100.... there again, you've got to do more work - to get the extra pennies like. (What do the girls think of that?) They think it should have gone up for below 100."

Barbara (final assembly) (39)

In the 1977 wage-claim discussions, a serious bid had, in fact, been made by the women members to get their officials to negotiate improvements to the payment system:

"We asked if the points system could be changed and they (the union officials) said - no way. Because it means changing the rate books they said the only way that we could help the main lines was a bit of bonus on what they earned. But it's not working out like that....

It was the craftsmen wanted it, because it goes on how much you're earning you see. They're having overtime and they're earning a good sum - they get a good thing out of it. But where there's no overtime, like the women on the lines - you get the same wage every week - and it's not so much as the other people....They were all for it, the

craftsmen, but us on the main lines, and the lower paid - they just, you know WE DIDN'T WANT IT REALLY....We wanted the points system - We wanted more money for our points system. Like for one point we get 12½p in a pound. Well, we wanted that changed, we wanted say, 15p, something like that. It's been 12½p ever since I've been with the firm. It used to be 2/6d - it was good money then...."

Edna (final assembly) (40)

And this year:

"We did get our 10%, plus a productivity scheme. But, for us, the productivity scheme isn't working through bad parts and things like that. So....we didn't really get anything extra, only the 10% really - when you really look at it"

Edna (final assembly) (41)

Apart from an overall increase in pay, the three main demands of the male workers concerned: consolidation of the now numerous supplements and bonuses into basic rates in order to provide higher earnings through overtime and shift working; average earnings for holiday pay (instead of basic rates) - again this affected overtime and shiftworkers especially; and finally improved differentials - of particular concern to the skilled groups (or rather those who designated themselves "craftsmen": namely the toolroom and maintenance workers).

In the final agreement consolidation was achieved for all of the manual workers and this was done in such a way as to achieve enhanced differentials at the same time. The sums consolidated into basic rates were: the £6 award of 1976; the lieu bonus (£4.50 male day workers; £3 male shift workers; £2.50 females) and the 10% increase of 1977. Ernie from the Stourbridge maintenance department explained how this was done:

"We consolidated last year's 10%, but we consolidated it for everyone - and it was OUR idea that, consolidated last years 10% - OK, we'll do it like this...

We broke the workforce up into groups and consolidated 10% of an average earnings figure for each. (Based on rates for 40 hours).

10% craftsmen	@ av. £90 = £9	consolidated onto the rate.			
" skilled	@ av. £80 = £8		"	"	"
" others	@ av. £70 = £7.50		"	"	"
" women	@ av. £50 = £5		"	"	"

Really, from our idea - everyone as I see it, gained."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (42)

In the end they had done quite well:

"If you take it on average, we - as the craftsmen, have probably had somewhere in the region of 18%. And the women..you know - excuse me referring to them in that term..(That's correct!) It's alright, because I know your feelin's....(No! They're women)...er, they probably had about 15% you know, something like that, 14 or 15%."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (43)

One or two anomalies had also appeared though, as Ernie again explained:

"When the lieu bonus for shift workers (£3) and for day workers (£4.50) was consolidated into the basic rates - straight away, when the shift bloke and the day bloke work together like on a weekend, they're on different basic rates aren't they? It's only talkin' about 4p...you know, but it's quite dear to some people's hearts....."

Now the firm have conceded to pay a shift worker on the same basis as a day man, when they work together.

....So while there's a different basic rate - it doesn't really make any difference..I think it makes about 50p per week difference - you know, but still..some people feel pretty sore about that...."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (44)

He somehow failed to notice a much bigger 'anomaly' whereby sex-based differentials had been (re-)introduced into basic rates, three years after their supposed abolition. These differentials had two major sources. One was the lieu-bonus noted above, which still stood at £2.50 for the women as a result of the (un)equal pay

agreement of 1975. It now reappeared in the basic rates alongside the consolidated average earnings increment. This consolidated increment, the second source of inequality, nicely took account of the higher basic rates and special bonuses accruing to the male workers alone. In the full awareness that these, for most of the men, would be immediately translated into further enhanced earnings by shift and overtime premiums - to which males alone had access.

As a result of the settlement therefore it can be said that a sex-based differential was firmly established within the "unisex" semi-skilled grade and the gap between men and women's rates and earnings in general was significantly widened.

Conclusions: Unequal bargains:

Every year the male workers received a larger share than the women of the total sum which the company was prepared to concede overall to labour. This unequal share did not simply occur in the usual, 'unconscious' way that it normally does. That is whenever percentage wage increases are implemented and the workers on the higher rates just happen to be men. As we have seen, the men at BSR also received various extraordinary direct payments and also consolidations which gave them a larger share of the kitty. And we are considering this before taking account of the effects of differential access - also favouring the male workers - to either the higher paid jobs or overtime and shiftwork, both of which also contributed to the men having higher earnings. What we are noting is that, simply in terms of the annual share-out, the men got more than the women.



This was the case even during the implementation of equal pay. The latter can more accurately be viewed as a process of grade restructuring, during which the women received some extra pay supplements, rather than one of re-distribution in terms of effecting any significant alteration in the proportions accruing to men and women workers. Conscious efforts were made, in fact, to achieve the first as far as possible without upsetting the overall balance of the second. In the wage deal of 1974, for example, when scope for effecting the 'normal' pattern of distribution through management was too restricted, it was brought about in a direct fashion, with the women 'giving' the men part of their annual increase and keeping their extraordinary supplement, as it were, intact.

Having examined the outcome of collective bargaining as here, on wages, it becomes necessary to explain the patterns that emerge. In the previous Chapter we showed how the employer's interest was carried in the process of joint-bargaining and examined what further implications flowed from this, in terms of the union's organisational structure on the one hand and the actual position of the women workers on the other. In this Chapter we have been looking at the outcome, not only of joint-bargaining - whereby the amount of surplus the employer concedes to the workforce is negotiated, but also 'collective' bargaining - whereby the pattern of its distribution within the workforce is negotiated by the workers themselves. As we will endeavour to show, this bargaining process also has further implications in terms of the organisational structure of the union and the position of the women workers overall.

Part of the process of examining why the union's bargaining structure was less effective with regard to the women workers must be to examine how and why it was more effective in relation to the men. In doing so it should certainly not be assumed that the male workers' demands were necessarily met in full - or that the men felt satisfied - as this was far from the case. What is being examined here is the relative strength of the men in relation to management, union and the women workers, which was reflected in their domination of the domestic organisation and bargaining structure. The main components of this will be analysed in the following Chapters by examining the main sources of the men's greater bargaining power and also the way it was used.

But we can begin the discussion here by looking more closely at events leading up to the conclusion of the 'Craftsman's Agreement' in 1978. This entailed a considerable amount of 'internal negotiation,' taking a variety of forms, among different groups of workers. And the outcome appears to reflect their differential bargaining strength - not only in relation to management but also to each other.

#### THE "CRAFTSMEN'S AGREEMENT"

"We can really hold the company to ransom,  
I s'pose - because we can switch all the power  
off, and no-one can work, you see."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor)

We have already noted that the wage settlement of 1978 incorporated the "craftsmen's agreement". This resulted in widened differentials within the skilled (male) grades, notably between the "tradesmen" and "BSR - skilled". It also resulted in the overall differential between men and women being increased to an even greater degree and, furthermore,

allowed the differential basic rates within the "unisex" semi-skilled grade to be restored. The wage settlement could also be seen as affecting the men and women differently. Since, broadly speaking, most of the direct production workers and those on piecework were female, the two most relevant parts of the package - one giving "enhanced incentive pay" (but only on performances over 100) and the other a "productivity" increment (also based on output) were for this group in particular directly conditional on a higher work-rate.

So the pattern of distribution of the proceeds from bargaining with the employer once again favoured the men in general and certain skilled groups among them in particular. This outcome was pressaged by the pattern of representation on the negotiating team (widened from 7 to 12) which included, apart from the four female convenors and their male deputies, representatives for the semi-skilled males, the skilled grades (men) and the 'craftsmen'. Thus, men in general were greatly over-represented and the skilled grades especially so. As we have already suggested, and as we can now go on to see, this pattern of representation along with the structure of the claim itself was the outcome of bargaining processes which had preceded the meeting with management. What was the main substance of the internal bargaining concerning this wage claim about?

As we have seen, the method advocated by the 'craftsmen' to achieve both a generalised increase of 10% and more greatly enhanced differentials was to consolidate bonuses and supplements into basic rates and also to consolidate 10% of an average earnings figure (calculated on 40 hour rates). This figure was selected to cover a particular group. Sections and individuals had first to be allocated

to these groups - each of which would then incorporate a range of actual rates and earnings - and all within the one 'band' would receive the same 'average earnings' increment. The process of grouping itself was, therefore, crucial and the subject of considerable internal negotiation before the employer was even approached.

One instance of the negotiations concerned the female supervisors. Their shopsteward, Jill at Stourbridge, made strong representations to the wage negotiating committee that these women should be grouped with the Chargehands (their male equivalent) who were graded as skilled, rather than with the rest of the women workers, as was first proposed. Although supposedly on the same grade, female supervision were on lower rates than their male counterparts who received an extra supplement for "setting" (even when they did not do it) which the women did not get. If the latter were 'banded' with the men, they would get a rise of £8 per week (based on 10% of the skilled grades' average £80) rather than £5 (based on the women workers' average - £50).

Jill was successful in her arguments; although Terry, the shopsteward for the male chargehands considered the chargehand grouping to be anomolous as a result - because, as he saw it, the band now included 'semi-skilled' (i.e. the female supervisors) and 'skilled' (the male chargehands) together. In his opinion, this resulted in the calculated average being £1.18 below the average of the skilled (male) group "proper". It was difficult to discover whether this did, as he claimed, result in some male chargehands actually being paid at a lower rate than the skilled grades they were supervising (since they all presumably got the £8). But there were certainly objections raised by these men to a basis of classification or calculation, which 'joined' them to their female counterparts.

He did not, by the same token however, see anything odd about the fact that he, as a chargehand in maintenance, had succeeded in getting himself classified in the top 'craftsmen's' grade, along with the chargehands in the toolroom (receiving a £9 increment instead of an £8 one). Because only the chargehands in these two areas were so classified - separately from their fellows, and in this higher 'grade'. So, who were the craftsmen?

Only the toolroom and maintenance workers were included in this category and it is clear that the development of the 'craftsmen's' classification at BSR supports in crucial respects arguments about how the construction of, or accession to, skilled status in general is based on bargaining strength as much, or more, than any other technical or 'objective' criteria. The position of the carpenters at BSR highlights this point particularly well. The answer to the question 'when is a craftsman not a craftsman?' seems to be, when he's a carpenter and he's not invited to the meetings.

The carpenters' shop was at Stourbridge. Fifteen of the twenty workmen in the building maintenance department were based there, the rest being stationed at the other factories. Their shopsteward was Michael, a fully qualified and experienced carpenter, who took a great deal of pride in his craft. He also acted as union representative for the thirteen workers in the garage, situated further down the yard.

Michael was extremely upset:

"I'm on the verge of hysterics over our craftsmen's business, now I can tell you! That's the only time in my life I've ever been so utterly...well humiliated if that's the right work for it. That somebody can NOT class us as being equal to them!

....we are known as craftsmen throughout the world. Yet for some reason we have been omitted from the BSR's craftsman's agreement."  
Michael (carpenter) (45)

Emphasis in original

The carpenters had never been invited or informed about the 'craftsmen's' meetings either. (46) Why had they been excluded? Ernie the maintenance department's shopsteward explained this in terms of a weekend overtime ban once instituted in his department which the carpenters had been reluctant to support at the time.

Another possible explanation - although not advanced as such - was that because the carpenters were paid at a lower rate than the maintenance engineers, to include them in the 'craftsman's' category would have lowered the average on which the 10% wage increase was based. (They had, in fact, been included in the 'skilled' category, receiving an £8 increase rather than the 'craftsmen's' £9. And the garage, paid even less, had been grouped lower still).

It appeared that the carpenters had not previously been aware of any discrepancy in their rates and they were now, of course, anxious to gain parity with maintenance workers on the engineering side. Their first (and minimum) demand however was to be given (back) the title of craftsmen. Ernie's explanation as to why this group, which already carried craftsman status, had not achieved classification as such, points once again to the basis of skill distinctions and titles, in bargaining strength and resources. And his response indicates how far the carpenters had lacked, or failed to mobilise these, not only in relation to management, but crucially in relation to the maintenance engineers themselves. He makes it clear that inclusion

in the top category had had to be negotiated in this way, since it was not automatic - by title - nor did it rely upon technical criteria (which the carpenters would probably have met more thoroughly than the maintenance men, in any case (see below p.639)).

"Carpenters are craftsmen, don't get me wrong. Garage mechanics - debatable as far as I'm concerned, but carpenters are craftsmen - definitely. But, I didn't see, and the rest of us didn't see, why we should fight on their behalf, when they weren't prepared to back us up. If they wanted to achieve something they must achieve it themselves, because they've had the opportunity and they abandoned us, as we saw it. So, although at this stage we've got no real objection to them becoming craftsmen, we don't see that we should fight for them. You know, they ARE craftsmen - don't get me wrong, but - OK if they want to be craftsmen - do what we did...."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (47)

Presumably, from this point, the carpenters would have to begin to negotiate support for their future claims with these other workers. But what is also made clear in the above statement of the maintenance workers' position, is the fact that the garage workers would require far more bargaining resources - in order to attempt to do the same.

If the carpenters had (so far) been unsuccessful in the process of internal bargaining through which the pattern of distribution of benefit was established, we need now to examine why and by what means those who gained the largest share, succeeded. Here we can see that the process of internal negotiations by means of which toolroom and maintenance workers established priority for their demands, took place on two main fronts: with other groups of workers and with the union's full-time officers.

To an important degree, the final outcome was promoted on the basis of organisation and momentum developed around their separate claims for special treatment pursued by both toolroom and maintenance men in the previous period.

"It was the biggest mistake the company ever made - when they gave permission for a meeting of the maintenance men in all the different factories. Never knew each other from Adam before, but once we got together - that was it - one body....We started making demands and voicing complaints."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (48)

The union officials had already been forced to respond to the demands of these two skilled groups, building up pressure to pursue sectional gains throughout the years of incomes policies which, in the main, prevented their negotiation. (At BSR, moreover, the male s' frustration had been given an added spur because the concurrent equality legislation also had had the effect of putting an end to the men's traditional expectations of returning to the bargaining table 'for a second bite' - i.e. to negotiate their own special claims). Toolroom workers had been pursuing a claim for staggered holidays, and a special, comprehensive claim for the maintenance men had already been drawn up and unofficially submitted for the company's 'future consideration' - with unofficial support from the officials - despite the fact that incomes policy did not permit this and other groups had not been allowed to do the same.

But when the 1978 wage claim came up for consideration at the beginning of that year the union's full-time negotiators still remained bound to the government's pay guidelines which ruled the claim out. Fears that the skilled men would attempt to break away from the organisation altogether in order to pursue the separate negotiations they had so long desired were spurred on by an awareness of a generally



increased confidence in the workforce which had resulted from their success in pressurising both company and union to skip stage 2, only six months earlier.

In the New Year shopstewards from toolroom and maintenance in all factories had joined forces to draw up their special claim jointly. And first of all they found they had to bargain with their own union officials. The regional official could neither agree to negotiate the claim nor refuse to do so. In a difficult position he and the regional secretary played what might be called, "an old-fashioned one-two". As Ernie who was the new shopsteward for the maintenance department at Stourbridge recalls:

"Well, first of all we tried to get rid of Paul Silver - which we did do - although we've still got 'im. We refused to 'ave 'im as our negotiator, you know, because we didn't think he'd...er, I s'pose Paul has to negotiate for the majority, and the majority are semi-skilled women and that, so... you know, we didn't think we were gettin' a fair deal out of it. And we had him... We went over to Jim Mason (the regional secretary) - a deputation - and had him thrown out like. At the end of the day, he still negotiates and that - you know... It was pointless really, we didn't gain anything, I mean... We had a big meeting up the labour club, and he was thrown out, and Jim Mason came - and he was gonna look after us and... 'Oh, you've got the best negotiator now - You'm alright now...' you know. But he was a waste of time. We had him in on a few meetings, 'Oh, you'll get that!' - But he never... You know, from experience afterwards... because I've since become deputy convenor - I've found Paul a good negotiator.

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (49)

Clear signals of management's determination to resist the men's claims meant that the latter needed to decide on strategy. Accordingly, they planned the first of a series of four mass-meetings, involving the toolroom and maintenance workers from all of the factories.

"Anyway I should say it was about April this year - and we started having collective meetings from the four factories. All the craftsmen - that's the toolroom and the maintenance - started having meetings. And when we had a meeting, we'd all switch all the power off at all the four factories - so everything came to a standstill.....We used to hire this labour club, I think it was Cradley Heath somewhere, and we just used to go out and close all four factories down - just to go there to have our meetings. Now, although it was only to have a meeting, this did have some effect, because it made the management realise that we could shut the four factories down and that we were going to do this, that and the other."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (50)

Shutting off the power was undoubtedly an effective tactic. Not least because it had never been done before - at any of the factories, let alone all of them simultaneously.

"We kept fighting for things and we were gettin' bits 'ere and bits there, and....They agreed to let us have an individual vote on holidays and wage rises etc and our own page in the rate book... and all this was goin' on - and then we came round to this year's wage negotiations, (in June) and...We suddenly appeared as "craftsmen", you know. Like - it was broken down into "craftsmen", "skilled" and "semi-skilled", you see. So really, we had achieved a status of craftsmen, and...I s'pose you could say - when the consolidation onto the rates and that, was put - we were....the top, you know. ...We worked out what our average was, and broke that down to 40 hours, and had that put onto our rates...We gained by that, as I said, we gained quite well by that."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (51)

The process of internal negotiations through which the two groups of men in the toolroom and maintenance department established an unequal distribution of benefit with priority for themselves also involved them in some bargaining with their fellow workers. In particular they found themselves having to negotiate with the women for a degree of acceptance, or at least acquiescence to their aims.

When the men switched off the power they closed down the compressors. This effectively immobilised large sections of production, and assembly because so many of the tools were powered by compressed air. The women therefore had no work and lost their wages.

"Now, we were 'rats of the week' then, you know - you used to walk round the factory and be booed and sneered at, and everything - and you know...er, p'raps they didn't fully understand our problem...anyway, we were trying to get the craftsmen's agreement drawn up...."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (52)

"The women were shouting and screaming, 'Oh it's alright for you! I'll come in and work weekends...' I said, 'Look, you can come and work my weekends, every weekend - but find out what your husband says when you're missing every weekend'".

Terry (maintenance chargehand) (53)

The men heard a rumour that the women were planning to "pass something against them" at the branch. "So we as craftsmen from all of the factories decided that we were all going to go up like". Ernie got up to speak and was called to the front where a microphone was put into his hand. Although he was a shopsteward he had never attended a branch meeting before.

"I was nervous...

No votes were passed so we didn't gain or lose anything by it really, you know, we just....I think we got across to some of the women our feelings like. You know, the blokes gone to tech. for seven years and that, and people can come into the BSR and be BSR-trained and get the same sort of money you know, after we've given up.... It isn't seven years now, but some of the older group have given up seven years to be trained. We got some of the women on our side you know what I mean? - Not all of them...."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (54)

"Well, if they're craftsmen and they have...got a degree, then they deserve, sort of a gap don't they? I mean, otherwise it would be silly them going learning a trade wouldn't it? But what... one thing I don't believe in, is that they should get all the cake, you know, and we get the crumbs. Because after all's said and done, I know if the girls've got no...(qualifications). If they haven't had to pass a course or anything, they (still) work damn hard. And I think everybody deserves so much. Yes, they're (the men) s'posed to have a little extra, but not (as much) as sometimes they do - it's quite a lump sum. (Do you think they get better treatment than the women?) Oh yes, I think they do really. Because I mean, every factory looks after their experienced man don't it? - their craftsman....."

Edna (final assembly) (55)

"It wasn't proved they were all time-served - there were no indentures shown. It was taken as the reason - that they were...."

Pearl (sub-assembly, convenor) (56)

(What do the women think about the craftsman's agreement?)

"Well, they'm all against it, aren't they? The women get up in arms when they know what the men are earning."

Pip (sub-assembly) (57)

Some attempt was made by those designating themselves 'craftsmen', to justify the distinction on technical grounds. In particular, they based their claim on the fact that they had been "indentured" and had trained at night-school for periods of five to seven years. This was not, in fact, true of those interviewed and it was probably only true of a handful altogether. As the shopsteward from maintenance (who had been presenting the above arguments in full, and had been the one to do so at the branch meeting) eventually admitted:

"Well, I didn't actually complete a full apprenticeship. Here's me shouting about - 'We did seven years' and we want our differentials back'. I only did three years and got a bit involved with ban the bomb and all that - I went off to London with me mates and bummed around."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (58)

This did not, apparently, detract anything from the main arguments which were used by the workers in maintenance and the toolroom to distinguish themselves from the 'BSR-skilled' especially, and also to justify to the workforce in general their claim to a larger slice of the cake and their "own" agreement. The problem was posed in terms of differentials.

"Well, I'm shopsteward for the maintenance...We are the craftsmen. We were pee-ed off with Government legislation etc., etc. There were guys comin' in being 'BSR trained' - blokes pullin' trucks about, and they were endin' up as setters. And us guys who'd gone to tech. and college and that, you know - got all our qualifications - the difference in money was only a couple of quid you know...I mean, not just here, it's the same all over the country really, isn't it?

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (59)

(What do people mean when they say 'BSR-skilled'?)

"There's none in maintenance - when you're talking about 'BSR trained' you're talking mainly about setters and inspectors. They're usually labourers, and then they have a go at setting. They go away for a week or a couple of weeks up to one of the factories and somebody shows them how to set up a press. And that was our biggest argument. They don't get the same money as us but the differential was very, very close... Considering they'd come off the streets virtually - as a labourer and had done a couple of weeks training - the difference in their money to our money was a couple to three quid. I mean, compared to people who've been to tech. five years....and also they couldn't do a job elsewhere, where they're not the same machines...."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (60)

Alongside arguments which referred to training for seven years ("We say that...actually, it isn't seven years - I think it's only five") ran another strand which sought to justify a larger share - on the grounds that these workers in contrast to the 'BSR-trained', possessed transferable skills. (It might well have been argued that those without transferable skills deserved the greater compensation). Ultimately, this distinction, together with all the other concepts which were used to justify an unequal distribution, was found to be confusing:

"Oh, all supervisors - they're classed as skilled. And....as I say, 'craftsmen' and 'skilled', to me - it's just the same thing, but two different words. Alright they'm....I mean, I'm 'BSR-skilled' - well, all the supervision here are 'BSR-skilled'; but there is also 50% of the 'craftsmen' - well, the maintenance men are BSR-skilled'. They couldn't go and get a job anywhere else - what they're doing - because they're BSR-skilled'....though a lot of 'em 'ave got the indentures, or whatever the word is....

Jill (final assembly, supervisor) (61)

Apart from the attempt to present their case directly to the membership at the branch meeting, the 'craftsmen' also found themselves having to admit the convenors into their 'special' meetings. This again meant them having to negotiate, to some extent, with the other workers' interests - which the convenors and deputies were representing:

"Convenors and deputies now go to meetings, but at first - remember it was in pay restraint - we were more concerned with ourselves, shall we say, than the women and we objected to it a little bit. (They did try once and we refused to let them be involved you know). But then we saw the sense in it you know, it's only fair that the convenors should have been kept in the picture as to what was going on, so if the rest of the members wanted to know- they'd be in the picture what had actually gone on. So - the convenors and deputies did used to come to our craftsmen's meetings in the end.

(Were they involved when you were organising for the agreement?)

"They weren't involved - in a sense we...they didn't take any part in formulating it, or negotiating. They were just present to see what was going on. Inevitably they sort of chirped in, or if it was going to affect some of THEIR members they'd say so - quite rightly so. But actually we negotiated for ourselves, they were just there to observe."

Emphasis in original

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (62)

But, although the lines of internal negotiation ran in every direction, they were not all weighted equally. So the final part to be illustrated in this section develops further the question of bar-

gaining strength and resources and their use in relation to other workers.

In this instance, the resources 'belonged' to the 'craftsmen'. When the maintenance men shut down the power supply which they controlled as part of their job, they utilised an effective means of forcing home their own special claims against management:

"We control the water pumps for the moulding shop. We control the compressed air and that controls the factory and the boilers. When we say to the boilerman, 'Come on Tony, we're out!', he'll say 'Hup, are we off for the day?' CLICK! Everything's off. That's it, it's like that."

Terry (Maintenance chargehand) (63)

It was also an effective means of forcing agreement from the rest of the workforce as well - to an unequal distribution of benefit in their own favour.

"After that (the 'craftsmen's' success) I found the women had a lot more respect for us, you know - they said, 'well, we don't mind the guys; you know, 'they're the man of the 'ouse', and all that.... Although they weren't sayin' this before, you know - They saw that we got something out of it, and they had more respect for it."

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (64)

What we have seen in this account is the not unexpected circumstance whereby strategically placed groups can win favourable treatment. But we are interested in exploring further the processes through which this is achieved. This is because we would argue, that structural inequalities in the bargaining position of different groups of workers which results in an unequal distribution of benefit within their ranks has further and on-going implications. And we are looking specifically at what impact the 'strong'male workers at BSR had on the position of the 'weaker'females.

This requires a more sophisticated view of bargaining relationships than is normally offered in industrial relations literature, where, if inequalities between different groups of workers are acknowledged at all, discussion may consider the potentially undermining impact of the weakly organised on the stronger. And where the impact of one group's power over another within the collective bargaining process itself is analysed, it is only the unequal relationship between the worker and the employer which is usually considered. But we have proposed the importance of, and focussed attention on, 'collective bargaining' which takes place within the ranks of labour. What are the implications of unequal bargaining relationships here?

Therefore, we need to ask: What further consequences arose for other workers as a result of the toolroom and maintenance men's mobilisation of their superior bargaining resources? What impact did this have on the union's organisational structure? What impact did this have on the bargaining position of other workers - particularly the women?

In some respects the dominance of these men over/within the union's bargaining and representational system can be seen to have had a similar effect from the point of view of the women members as management's domination did, with the predominance of the skilled group's interests and their over-representation at key points in the organisation (such as the negotiating team) tilting the structures and rendering these less responsive to the women's (and other workers') competing or alternative needs. (The decision to implement the productivity deal on a percentage basis might be taken as a single, illustrative example). The first general consequence for other workers we might note, therefore, is a reduction in bargaining resources - to the extent that such institutional structures are a source of these.



But the unequal bargaining relationship between workers in this case study can be seen to have other more direct effects on the position of the 'non-craft' workers. We have already noted that costs for the workforce, deriving from the employer's interest, can be re-distributed within their ranks by stronger groups, to be borne by those with lesser bargaining 'strength' - with the subsequent impact of diminishing this still further. But there is a further question of cost distribution arising here. Specifically, who is to bear the main costs of the dispute? This is an issue which was also negotiated between different groups in the workforce. And what we find is that the 'craftsmen', who were in control of the most crucial bargaining resources in relation to management, i.e. the switches, were again in a position to impose their decision (this time on the distribution of cost rather than benefit) onto other workers. Moreover, the interests reflected in their decision are quite clearly again, those of co-exploitation, as the following incident shows.

On each occasion that the 'craftsmen' had stopped the factories the women lost their wages. (It is not clear whether the 'indirect' male workers did so to the same extent). A deputation, representing the female production workers went to the maintenance men to ask for their support. They wanted the power switched off in order to get management to pay their wages for the periods they had been laid off because of the 'craftsmen's' meetings. The argument of the maintenance steward shows that the men clearly saw there was a choice - either the women or the employer should bear the main costs of their dispute:

"One thing should be sorted out - when there is any disruption, like when they switch the power off, that all the girls should have been paid. It wasn't their fault, management should have been forced....The girls should have been compensated in some way. But I mean, I don't want to get a situation where everybody's on strike every five minutes because they know they're going to get paid for it, because that's all very well, but at the end of the day you know, you end up on the scrap-heap don't you - the company does anyway - they just can't afford it.

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (65)

Since the women were not in a position to organise against the men, the latter ignored their request. When they were forced to make a small concession - to give notice of future meetings - (many women travelled over 20 miles to the factory from the outlying areas), it was mainly as a response to pressure deriving from management.

"....See, the management uses it. We promised we'd be back by a certain time. We've kept that promise, we will always be back by that time. But management by then have always sent the women home - used it see - 'Oh well, it's the maintenance that's out! Whereas we've also promised we'd try to give between 48 and 24 hours notice to the shopstewards and convenor before we went out and we kept that promise as well. At one time we'd just say, 'out' and that was it, but then they began....because of the complaints, we thought about it...'Be fair', we got agreement from the lads and 'we'll give you due notice' - which we were doing."

Terry (Maintenance chargehand) (66)

More general implications for the position of the women flow from this example. The craftsmen were well aware that in making their achievements they had set an example which others would be seeking to follow. This could be, and was, expressed in the classic manner of the "wage-pull" hypothesis: everyone might gain as a result of the initial breakthrough or 'lead' that these particular groups had taken.

"We'd got together and decided we were gonna stick together. We're achieving a little, you know, a little bit at a time. And I think the women admire us for this - because like, just say we're top of the tree - whatever we achieve they've got to achieve something as well. Because the management know that if it's seen that us craftsmen have switched everything off and they've got this - well they know very well that however mild and meek the women or the other semi-skilled gonna be, they're not going to stand for it - they're going to want something as well. So whatever we achieve they've got to give it collectively - in a way - to all the others haven't they?"

Ernie (maintenance, deputy convenor) (67)

My emphasis

But could the other workers utilise the same avenue to success?

For in order that gains might be more widely generalised it would be necessary for the bargaining resources to be similarly generalised or shared. Since no other group could assemble resources of comparable power to back up their position in collective bargaining it certainly might be expected that others would seek to enjoin some of this strength to their own account, in particular those with the least resources available from their own position in the labour process, such as the women workers. However, the 'craftsmen' controlled the switches and it is clear from the responses of both stewards representing the maintenance side, that the women would have to negotiate with these men for the use of this bargaining resource - (before they could get into a strong enough position to bargain with the management).

"Meself...I get the impression that the women are sort of hopin' that if there's any problems we'll automatically stick by 'em, and switch the power off and everything - which we would do - but I mean, not willy-nilly for...You know it would have to be a good....a good thing you know, and we'd have to believe in it like - you know."

Ernie (Maintenance, deputy convenor) (68)

(my emphasis)

"We have found over a period of time that when the girls on the line begin to get upset they'll up and out and there's no reason for it. They won't explain to us why they want it (the power) off."

(Have the women ever asked you - the maintenance men - to stop the power?)

"Well, they've come up. But they've come up in a big deputation sort of thing. And the blokes won't be forced like that, they want to know the reason. If a couple of female shopstewards went to the shopsteward in maintenance with the convenor and said, 'Look - could we explain to the lads why we're going out and ask for their backing....'"

(When was the last time you had a deputation?)

"Oh, when there's been disputes on the lines.

(Do you think there would be a time when you would actually stop it for the women?)

"Well, dependent on what it was. And if they came and explained themselves without getting too emotionally upset and this, that and the other. Because some of them do, they do start crying, as I've said...And if they came and explained it quietly, correctly to all the lads in the shop. And then we could discuss it - they'd go out and we'd discuss it. And if we thought it was, you know, worthwhile, and we thought that it was for a good reason, we'd go out with them.

Terry (maintenance chargehand) (69)

(my emphasis)

It is clear that the 'craftsmen's' position of having control over the switches put them in a strong position not only in relation to management but the union officials and the rest of the workforce as well. They could significantly influence the bargaining agenda in terms of what other groups required or could aspire to; they could also impose their own interests upon it. While we have shown that the 'craftsmen' had, themselves, to negotiate some support for their aims, the amount of organisation and energy required to do this bears little relation to that which the women (or the garagemen) for example,

would have to generate in order to successfully impress their demands for equality on them. The bargaining resources utilised by the 'craftsmen' against management can thus be seen as a source of bargaining strength in relation to other workers as well. And neither equality, in the face of the demands for differentials, nor a reduced rate of exploitation, in the face of the interests of co-exploitation, would be likely to find a place on any agenda this group of men controlled.

Chapter 13 Unequal Pay Negotiations 1973-1978

- (1) Ref GH 11/S2 : 397-411
- (2) For a brief discussion of some of these points see: "Women's Pay in informal payment systems" Christine Craig, Elizabeth Garney and Jill Rubery, Department of Employment Gazette, April 1983 pp 139-148.
- (3) Details of these can be found elsewhere and are mentioned here only where applicable e.g. Clegg (1980) chapter 9.
- (4) "In 1972 the margin between the earnings of an engineering fitter and an engineering labourer was 37%. By 1976 this figure had fallen to 27% (in the Midlands)....the margin between the skilled male machinist and the male labourer fell from 65% to 49%, and that between the skilled electrician and the labourer from 53% to 35%." Clegg (1980) p.370.
- (5) Hugh Clegg notes that, while such narrowing is by no means reflected in the overall earnings distribution of either men or women, compression certainly was significant in particular industries like engineering. He is more inclined to relate such changes in pay relativities to the rate of price inflation than the conscious strategies of governments. Thus, sharp reductions in differentials coincided (as during the war), with rapid price inflation (e.g. 1974-5) and as the rate of inflation slowed, differentials widened again.
- (6) Yet how could this policy be changed? Tired of passing ineffective resolutions through the branch, the BSR membership was hard pressed for constitutional ways of expressing their views to the leadership. A suggested one-day demonstration strike (from the semi-skilled men in the machine shops) was put down by officials and a giant petition organised instead. This was delivered to David Basnett at Head Office by the mass of BSR stewards who had hired a coach for the occasion. The trip almost had to be called off because of the membership's own action - "the bonus dispute". See Sandwell Evening Mail 22.3.1977.
- (7) Clegg (1980) p.376.
- (8) E.g. January 1977 Roy (shopsteward) goes to London for advice from ACAS and the Department of Employment on ways to get more money for males in automatic machine shop (Old Hill). 8.2.77 P.S. (r.o.) to meeting of the shopstewards committee, Old Hill: "I object to this. If Roy wants to know anything about pay policy...I object to Roy going over my head. If he wants to throw stones, I'll throw some back. It may well be that the members here are not being well served. In fact, some statements Roy has made are detrimental and one member at least has suffered from it...."

(9) Ministers in the Conservative administration managed to avoid making this an enforceable requirement and employers advised each other on the methods of implementation which would minimise costs to themselves (i.e. gains for the women). E.g. 'Equal Pay : A Further Paper of Guidance with Particular Reference to Job Evaluation'. EEF July 1971.

(10) See for example: Incomes Data Study No.56 July 1973; Department of Employment Research Paper no.20 and Mandy Snell (1979)

(11) The minister decided to waive his powers requiring firms to have brought women's rates up to 90% by the end of 1973.

(12) On average women's rates were 10% lower than men's in the engineering industry in 1973 and 12½% lower across the private industrial sector as a whole. But these comparisons are with the unskilled or lowest prevailing male rate.

Minimum earnings levels at BSR 1973

	£ per 40 hours	p. per hour	%
Females	18.00	45	80
Skilled males	25.00		
Semi-skilled	22.50	56	
Unskilled	20.00		

Source: Guaranteed Week Agreement 12.11.1973.

(13) Ref 23.2.77/149

(14) At only 3 points in the minutes of 1973-4 is there any indication of the women workers' dissatisfaction with pay, viz: fixed performance (4.4.74 - no discussion); grading (15.8.74 - referred back to domestic i.e. individual factory level); complete restructuring of the piecework system (4.4.74 - turned down by the officials).

(15) It was pointed out that since this was against union policy, it could not be done.

(16) The lieu-bonus:

"It started off as an agreement for timekeeping. Toolroom got it first - maintenance next, then it went to the rest of the skilled men. Then when the ladies came onto equal pay, they dropped it down to the semi-skilled men, just to...It was a bit of... They did the equal pay in two jumps and it was just a little thing to keep the men ahead."

Terry (Maintenance chargehand) Ref TM 17/S3:231-

(cont'd)

"I brought up the question of the £1 bonus for the men. This marked me out.

In actual fact, my department, we don't have a lot of problems in respect as toolroom and maintenance do, we haven't got the wage structures you see. So, of course...I told Ellen (convenor) that - once we were told we'd got (the) lieu bonus, they were satisfied, that satisfied them for a long time - I can keep the semi-skilled men off their backs. They don't have a lot of trouble with them. So we don't GET a lot of the issues that a lot of the departments get. In fact probably less aggro comes from the semi-skilled men than any other department.

Gordon (storeman) Ref GH 9/S2:240-268.  
emphasis in original (upper case underlined).  
my emphasis (lower case underlined)

(17) The 1974 wage award (see Appendix 4 for details in full)

Female adult F/T £4.87 + equal pay (£2.68)  
Female junior F/T £3.97 + equal pay (£2.68)  
Male skilled £4.84 + 1/3 shift allowance of £1.61 where appropriate  
Male semi-skilled (p'wk) £3.00 + 1/3 shift allowance of £1.00 where appropriate  
+ 1/4 shift allowance of £1.50 where appropriate  
Male semi-skilled (Indirect) £3.60 + 1/3 shift allowance of £1.20 where appropriate  
+ 1/4 shift allowance of £1.80 where appropriate  
Junior Males £1.85  
OAP £2.25

(18) This was supposed to be half of the differential between the men and the women's rates. (i.e.

Male piecework base rate £24.20  
Female piecework base rate 18.84  
Differential £ 5.36 (50% : £2.68)

(19) Total wage award per week £30,693

Total amount of wage award to females £23,134 (or 75%)  
Number of females (full-time equivalent) 4,600 or 77%  
Total amount of wage award to males £7,559 (25%)  
Number of males 1,377 or 23%

Total wage award - net of equal pay increment £18,143

Total amount to females net of equal pay £10,584 (or 58%)  
Total amount to males £ 7,559 (or 42%)



- (20) See Appendix 4  
Male Inspection - creation of a new 'technical' grade.  
Builders and motor mechanics - an award to reduce their differential with maintenance. And heavy drivers - an addition to their base rate.
- (21) Ref 9.3.1977 p.131.
- (22) With no increase for those earning more than this. The TUC had proposed the cut-off point of £7,000.
- (23) Branch minutes 4.3.1975.
- (24) Company's offer 11.6.1975 Clause 3.
- (25) Ibid Clause 4.
- (26) For full details of the 1975 wage settlement see Appendix 5  
Results of ballot 13.6.1975

	<u>Accept</u>	<u>Reject</u>
Skilled males	81	288
Semi-skilled males	95	841
Females	3295	851

- (27) Shift workers were not, up to this point in receipt of the initial £1 lieu bonus; because they could always 'make more' out of the pay-policy-restricted rises where these were reflected in shift premiums. The £1 was to compensate day-workers who could not 'make' this money.

- (28) "I am a cleaner at BSR Garretts Lane. This cleaning involves ladies toilets, reception areas, some offices and lunch tables.
- We have 2 men pensioners sweeping up part-time and these men get more money than us two lady cleaners.
- My manager and union rep (MB) say this is because they get a loo bonus, what I want to know is why, when they do not touch the loos in their job.
- I have been trying to alter this for about 2 months now and now I have been advised to write to you.
- I have been told there is nothing they can do about it owing to a union clause. I want to know why when it is supposed to be equal pay these days. Hope to get an answer from you soon."
- Letter received at the branch office.

(29) Ref 9.3.1977/131

(30) Ref 16.12.1976/E106.

(31) But the company refused to break the £6 limit and the shift men's claim was taken to the Department of Employment which ruled it was, indeed, outside pay policy. So they didn't get it. The resulting anomaly had lasting effects because in 1978 all pay-policy supplements and lieu bonuses were consolidated into basic rates.

(32) "It was pointed out that the £2.00 lieu bonus given to the men, was part of the 1975 wage deal and the female members voted for acceptance of this deal and that the £2.00 would be excluded in the claim for 'Equal Pay'."

Branch minutes 29.4.76. (M59)

(33) Motion to branch meeting 24.2.1977 (placed at the end of the agenda and not discussed through lack of time).

"The members of the 69/BSR branch are not prepared to accept the 5% allowable under the social contract, as their wage increase for 12 months from their wage agreement, 1977.

We therefore, reserve the right to renegotiate a further increase as soon as government policy allows."

(34) "The Branch Mandate states clearly under no circumstances will phase two of the Government's legislation be accepted, and the pay settlement must be deferred until we have further details of phase three, when settlement must be back-dated to June 1st, 1977. If the final settlement should revert to phase two or the 1st August if settlement is in phase three."  
Communication to the company following branch meeting 12.5.77 (p.301 and 344b).

(35) Exchange at Branch Committee meeting 26.5.1977

"In fairness to the factory floor workers - decisions always come from the factory floor. You're telling these women now, that because 200 men turned up to the branch meeting, they're going to be done out of what they're entitled to."

Trevor (branch chairman)

"Rubbish'. Get it right, many women agree with us - it's not just 200 men - women as well. You're giving the wrong impression."

Keith (Shopsteward, toolroom)

"The women aren't just working for pin-money - therefore they have a right to have a say in their wage packets..."

Trevor

"What I'm saying is, it's up to us to make sure they do backdate and the women don't lose anything."

Keith

- (36) A further consequence of the stewards' attempts to safeguard their position was a historic meeting between shopfloor and staff (in Matsa : 100% membership agreement) representatives. Normally, wage negotiations for office staff opened on July 1st following the manual workers' settlement. Traditionally, relations between the two groups of workers were very poor and the 'union' sides had never shown an inclination to co-operate. The manual workers, in particular, saw the staff side as "jealous of", and "parasitic on", their "superior strength". Now, however, the former required a common wage policy because if the staff side agreed to settle, the manual workers would be forced to follow suit. At a tense meeting, co-operation was agreed and future meetings mooted.
- (37) Apart from workers' efforts the level of output and therefore performance was as much dependent upon the supply, flow and quality of parts as well as the distribution of units ('good and bad paying') - outside their control.
- (38) Ref OH4/TI : 475-500.
- (39) Ref BB19/S2 : 143-150.
- (40) Ref EW21/S3 : 215-220.
- (41) Ref EW11/S1 : 800.
- (42) Ref ECiv/S1 : 245-261.
- (43) Ref ECv/s1 : 285-290.
- (44) Ref ECv/S1 : 310-325.
- (45) Ref MC11 & 30/S3 : 886-990.
- (46) Although part of the same building, their shop opened onto the yard. Compared to machine maintenance, their work, too, was far less integrated into the main body of the factory.
- (47) Ref EC19/S3 : 365-380.
- (48) Ref EC7-8/S2 : 480-518.
- (49) Ref EC11/S1 : 179-200.
- (50) Ref EC11/S1 : 200-210 & 19/S3 : 400-420.
- (51) Ref EC11-111/S1 : 217-225.

- (52) Ref ECii/S1 : 215.
- (53) Ref TM16/S3 : 150-155.
- (54) Ref EC13/ S3 : 31-60.
- (55) Ref EW6 (b) /S1 : 345-362.
- (56) Ref PB9/S2 : 270-280.
- (57) Ref PW46/S4 : 460.
- (58) Ref EC50/S6 : 220-230.
- (59) Ref ECii/S1 : 173-180.
- (60) Ref EC20/S3 : 470-514.
- (61) Ref JA44/S5 169-180.
- (62) Ref EC18/S3 : 329-350.
- (63) REef TM22/S3 : 521-530.
- (64) Ref ECiv/S1 : 218-225.
- (65) Ref EC32-33/S4 : 761-800.
- (66) Ref TM23/S3 : 568-590.
- (67) Ref EC8/S2 : 545-560.
- (68) Ref ECiv/S1 : 225-235.
- (69) Ref TM23/S3 : 546-604.

CHAPTER 14:

CONTROL IN THE BARGAINING PROCESS  
DISPUTING THE DISTRIBUTION OF "COSTS"

"It was agreed that everything possible had been done..."

In the previous two chapters we have examined the impact of collective bargaining on the women workers from the point of view of its distributional aspects. We have identified the main problems as deriving from unequal power in the bargaining relationships: first in respect of the employer and secondly the men. These together reinforce the institutional structures as mediating and imposing the interests of these two groups as against those of the women. We have asked - what are the consequences of this? In both cases we have found that the structures themselves are rendered unresponsive and more difficult for the women members to 'work'. They are therefore required to use comparatively greater bargaining strength in order to utilise these effectively. On the other hand, we have noted that the absorption of 'costs' has the continuous effect of diminishing this strength and the bargaining resources at the women workers' disposal.

There are further aspects to be considered which arise from institutionalised bargaining inequality, because this process of cost deferrment, which arose as the main consequence, did not go uncontested. In fact it continuously generated opposition and collective resistance on the part of the women workers, and some examples of this will be described.

In this chapter and the one following, therefore, we are going to be looking at several case studies, all of which concern men and women workers at BSR on strike or taking industrial action against management during the period of investigation. There were some very marked distinctions in the 'men's' and the 'women's' disputes, so much so, that most of them could quite clearly be delineated in this way.

This was even the case when mass action such as 'the bonus strike' involved both the men and women workers at the same time.

Viewed broadly, the most interesting and obvious contrast between the sexes was that industrial action involving the males chiefly concerned 'compensatory' or 'consumption' issues (the distribution of reward); while those involving the women centred, almost exclusively, on control issues (the distribution of 'costs').

We are not, of course, trying to maintain that these 'types' of issues are totally separate. But there are some important distinctions, nevertheless, which we would see as having a bearing on trade union organisation and structure, whether it is men or women who are involved. The special significance of this from the female members' point of view lies in the fact that, we would argue, production control issues in general are even more crucial for women workers than they are for men. (And in this research as a whole we have shown in detail, how this might be seen to be the case).

In his study, first published in 1920, Carter Goodrich saw "the workers interests in Industry" as falling into two main sets. The first concerned the 'consumption' aspects of employment, the second concerned 'production' aspects. Although the two are linked, it is the latter which fits most closely "the issues of discipline and management which are the frontier of control". Goodrich (1975) p.20.

This concept, therefore, designates the meeting point of interest conflict between employer and labour, over the organisation of production. It 'ebbs and flows' as it reflects temporary shifts in the bargaining power of either side. But the terrain, he notes, has already been unequally divided; most if it having been 'claimed' by the employer and rendered non-negotiable (as is frequently and explicitly stated in agreements which set down managerial prerogatives).

Thus, although both the worker's 'consumption' and 'production' interests are the subject of collective bargaining, they are not equally so. And as long as this is the case relationships are likely to remain fundamentally unchanged.

"An employer's control over industry is not destroyed by the fact that he has to buy labor with much the same equality in bargaining that he buys other factors in production. And matters of toilets and airspace and welfare work are after all not vital to absolute power over the actual organisation of production".  
ibid pp. 53-54.

Bargaining over wages, hours and conditions comprises, of course, the dominant field of trade union activity. And asking "what degree of control do trade unions exercise over the relations of man to man (sic) in Industry - the employment and discipline relationships; and over the relations of man to the work itself - ?" He gives the answer:

"directly and explicitly, very little"  
ibid pp. 54-55.

We are, here, interested in exploring further the links between these two areas of collective bargaining and also the further implications of such 'institutionalised prioritisation', of the one sphere (consumption) over the other (production).

We open with an account of two strikes which occurred within the space of a month. The first involved women alone, on the final assembly lines at the Old Hill factory. It was clearly a response against intensified working instituted by management in this period. The union officials were brought in to negotiate a settlement - not only with management but with the workers concerned. We know that management had already set the bargaining agenda, production issues were non-negotiable; and the union negotiators were committed to protecting the members' earnings in the context of an efficiently managed firm. How were these different sets of interests 'managed' in the bargaining process?

First we find that the women had to negotiate with their officials (unsuccessfully) on the content of 'their demands'. Secondly, the 'real' issues, no longer the main subject of negotiation at the bargaining level the women had managed to achieve by taking action, were displaced 'downwards' to a lower level of negotiation at which they could not be successfully resolved. Finally, we see that while some of the issues (in this example 'bad parts') might, by dint of special effort, be forced onto the bargaining agenda - only to be redefined and repositioned; others (like movement of labour) might never make it at all. In the first dispute the issue remained below the surface of even the initial set of 'negotiations' - between members and officials. However, it was so crucial that without some indication of its 'presence' the strike itself becomes less easy to understand.

Movement of labour was central to the other strikes examined as well. In the second case study - the 'bonus dispute' - both men and women workers at all four factories were involved. Here again, we can identify some interesting aspects of the way 'demands' are formulated, and the 'pre' bargaining process which takes place before officials and management 'meet'. Institutional mediation through the system of representation and the domination of the men together resulted in the women workers' grievances either having no 'presence' on the bargaining agenda, or if they were there, being in a somewhat 'translated' form.

By a series of coincidental 'accidents', however, there was a 'break' in the edifice whereby a few women workers found themselves in a position to talk directly with managers and, subsequently, the officials; and when this happened the underlying pressures 'explaining' the strike were suddenly brought into view. In the series of



negotiations between management and officials held subsequently, however, it is possible to see how heavily these had (once again) become overlaid by other sets of interests which shaped the bargaining which actually took place at this level.

Having examined two disputes where movement of labour was a somewhat 'hidden' item on the agenda, we then go on to look at what happened on those occasions it was so explicitly the issue in dispute that the members' demands could hardly be 'negotiated' into other 'forms'.

We have already suggested that when the distribution of 'costs' is directed 'downwards' (i.e. onto the workforce as a result of joint bargaining), their distribution subsequently is the subject of further 'negotiations' within the ranks of the workers themselves. These take place continuously and as we have also suggested - with disruptive and divisive effect. But when, as a result of the build-up of pressure arising from the accumulated mass of unresolved grievances, the workers go on strike, the question is forced onto the 'joint' bargaining table again. The members attempt to effect another kind of re-distribution of this cost, back onto the employer. When this is blocked the process of negotiating a redistribution amongst themselves takes place once more - only this time in a semi-official or institutional form which gives us a quite unambiguous view of the process.

#### The Lines' Strike

Early in March 1977 there was a stoppage on the final assembly lines at the Old Hill factory. The strike marked a period of intensified working which had been taking place in all of the factories. New orders were scarce at this time of year, and management had been running down the workforce fairly rapidly (by stopping the recruitment

of operatives), striving at the same time to maintain the previous high pace of production. In this part of the season when output was not really 'wanted' - in the sense that it was going to stock - there was paradoxically much more pressure on the workforce than when large orders were being rushed through on short deadlines in the latter part of the year. This occurred as a result of the process of intensification already described and the more numerous opportunities taken by management, for experiments in increasing productivity.

The main problems experienced by the female employees concerned increased movement of labour and bad parts. Whole sections were liable to be broken down at short notice and the workers dispersed. This effected a reduction in output in certain areas where this was required, and also provided labour with which to fill in the 'gaps' caused by 'natural wastage' when these became a problem elsewhere. Bad parts put into assembly effected both a reduction in overall output and directly reduced workers' earnings, whilst maintaining the same high pace of work (the operatives were only paid for the number of units packed). It was the increasing impact of both of these practices which led to the strike at Old Hill, where a smaller range of cheaper models meant they had an even stronger effect.

As we have already noted, complaints about having to work with bad components were a constant issue for the women working in assembly. And in the first three months of the year, the problem was experienced in an even more acute form. Girls on the final assembly lines at Old Hill were frequently finding their wage packets reduced by £2-£3. And matters came to a head on Wednesday 9th March, when line 6 downed tools on receiving wages sheets which showed their earnings reduced by £2.50 compared with the previous week. Many had been complaining of exhaustion from the number of units they were handling on the line - some were circulating six or seven times - and clearly the women were

only being paid for a relatively small fraction of the work which they had had to do.

Workers on the other final assembly lines rapidly followed suit, and within a short time all 500 women on the 9 main lines had stopped. They came in to work the following day but on taking their places refused to begin until their demands had received some attention. The rest of the workforce continued to work normally. The union officials were called to an emergency meeting at the factory. And shop stewards told them that the operatives wanted 'something done about' bad parts being put on the line. They also wanted a proper system of allowances to be negotiated, which was not totally reliant on management's discretion. While this was being worked out, they wanted to be paid at a fixed performance level (i.e. a guaranteed wage, giving close to average earnings) instead of continuing with an 'incentive system' which had grown dependent on an increasingly arbitrary count.

"We were put on a breakdown. We worked very, very hard. They said we'd be paid fair, but they wouldn't tell me what we'd be getting. When we had the pay sheets - prior to doing the breakdown, we'd had two bad days due to bad work - he'd paid a 94 and for the breakdown period too! It was disgusting he did that - we sweated our guts out...." Shop Steward, line 9 (1).

In these discussions, which were taking place prior to the officials meeting management, the process of negotiation was already in train - between the members' representatives and the full-time officers on the bargaining issues themselves.

The officers straight away voiced a reluctance to argue for the women to be paid on a fixed performance, even on a temporary basis, being concerned, apparently, with the possible impact on output of losing the 'incentive' element: "will they give a proper effort to get this?" (the shop steward's reply was indignant). And fearing what would happen if the stoppage spread to other areas - management were

always very quick to lay other sections off - their aims were to secure some financial compensation and an immediate end to the strike.

Paul Silver (Union Official)

"Would the girls go back if we asked for a guarantee to pay average earnings for that week?"

Shop Steward "No, not if its a week"

Mary West  
(Branch Secretary)

"The company's trying to get the work ... they need to get a breathing space".

Paul "I'll ask Tony Stuart (Industrial Relations Director) if he'll accept average earnings for the week"

Mary "We don't want the dispute going to other areas - it's just for the lines". (2)

On meeting the 'employers' side', performance figures for all of the lines were called for and examined. An improved 'offer' for those suffering a reduction in earnings in the previous week was jointly established.

There was an obvious gap, throughout these discussions, between the needs and aims of the workers themselves and this line of negotiation. Even from the factory managers' own account it can be seen that the women had wanted action on the problem of the bad components itself. When line 6 stopped work, the production manager had already offered to pay - at a performance level above their usual average - if they would simply start work again in order to clear the congested lines. But the women had refused.

"They said they wanted all the units taken off the line. I said I'd pay an average performance of 119 for these particular ones. So they said - put it in black and white, we don't trust you. So we did.

And then they came back and wanted all the components off. We checked them, and they were alright.

Then they wanted the part-assembled off - so I said we'd put a chalk mark on and I'd pay average earnings for these components. But they still wont go back". Bert Long (factory manager).

The outcome of these negotiations between the full-time officials and top management did not reflect the aims of the members in taking action. Management agreed to make up the wages of those who had suffered a drop in the previous week to the level of the week before. While this offer was accepted, the line Stewards continued to voice concern that the operatives would still be getting bad components. This, the officials declared, was a matter which would have to be resolved in 'a factory-level' discussion.

Predictably, the factory-level discussions, held when work had been resumed, resolved very little. Only the production manager, line stewards and the convenor were involved.

A report from Quality Control had shown that when 144 units assembled on line 9 were checked, 133 (over 90%) were faulty. Over 200 actual faults were found giving a rate of 140 faults per 100 units.

Three quarters of these faults had their sources elsewhere (i.e. they did not derive from work done on the final assembly line). When components brought to the lines on one day were checked, over 3,000 major items were found to be faulty together with an uncountable number of smaller parts batched in tins. Against one item, 38,000 1/4 inch screws with the thread missing, was appended a note to the effect that supervision had been told these screws must be used "at lines' cost". Management's response was to blame the workers in sub-assembly, and to agree to investigate inspection procedures. They also promised to show the line stewards how allowances for rejects and bad components were already built into job values.

Other demands which had been listed by the line stewards included the need for two floats per line, fair distribution of better paying units, lower counts on heavier units, and a proper system of assessing

compensation for 'problem work' which reduced the earnings "through no fault of their own".

But in a subsequent discussion to inform managers in other factories about this meeting "in case they tell you there's been big give-aways", it was clear that management's use of discretion had remained fully protected, and although the floats had been guaranteed, a line was to be broken to do it. (3) Management's response to the request for improved pay overall through lower counts, or higher values was that this would only be considered (when pay policy allowed) if "brought up as a serious trade union request" (meaning, by the full-time officers).

Bad parts, the problem of having to work with them as well as the unsystematic discretionary 'method' of compensation, where payments had constantly to be (re)established and earnings were, in any case, always at risk, was as we have noted above, a constant grievance of the women workers on assembly. It was continuously taken up by the shop stewards (and also 'local' supervision) but it was always designated a 'domestic' issue by the negotiating officials. This designation served as an effective means of pushing such grievances back down the bargaining levels whenever they threatened to (re)appear. Occasionally, as in this instance, pressure and frustration built up to such an extent that the women stopped work and attempted to get matters resolved. While this was successful to the extent that it engaged both the full-time officers and top management, i.e. propelled the issue into a higher bargaining level, further efforts foundered on the policy of both parties only to negotiate the financial side of the questions involved, to resolve the immediate stoppage and not to contest production practices. Pushed back down to lower bargaining levels each individual section had again to battle with a problem they could not, on their own and at that level, resolve.

In contrast to bad parts, however, movement of labour failed almost entirely to achieve recognition as an issue in the stoppage at all. But from the shop stewards' comments it was clearly a significant aspect of the dispute as far as their membership was concerned.

The company's policy of not replacing workers meant that not only was the incidence of mobility (and doubling-up) increased - its scope was extended as well. As productive capacity was contracted, throughout the factory workers were moved not only within areas or sections, but between them - to a much greater extent than before. And whole lines or teams were 'broken down' and the workers dispersed to fill in 'gaps' elsewhere.

But so far was this from having the status of a negotiable grievance, that in the initial meeting between line representatives, officials and management, the production manager was able to restate the same threats he had already been making to the workforce, namely his intention to break down line 7 altogether as a disciplinary measure, (they were the lowest performers) to set an 'example' to the others.

This was not taken up by the officials, nor was the underlying issue of under-staffing ever raised, even though this was, clearly, at the root of the problem of increased labour mobility and doubling-up which was having such an impact on all of the final assembly lines.

In the issue's constructed 'absence' from the negotiations, the lines' strike appeared to revolve solely around the workers' loss of earnings due to bad parts. As a result, when the officials called for the figures, the full extent of the stoppage became rather less easy to understand. Only three of the final assembly lines had actually suffered a loss of earnings in that particular week. Three, indeed, had done better than in the week before.

<u>Line</u>	<u>Performance last week</u>	<u>Performance this week</u>
1	104	106
2	107	118
3	100	100
4	110	110
5	107	100
6	119	93 (first to stop
7	95	96 (threatened with break)
8	108	108
9	104	95

Although the women operatives on the main lines at Old Hill took up work again, it was not resumed at the same pace as before. A re-evaluation of the relationship between earnings and effort appeared to have taken place, being encapsulated in a generally held view "that there was little point in them killing themselves - they didn't get any more money for it". And from this time, performances appeared to drop 'spontaneously'. Even improved incentive pay incorporated by the union officials into the wage deal of the following year, made little apparent difference either to this or the general downward drift experienced in the other factories as well.

Meanwhile, in this particular period, the same increase of pressure which had precipitated strike action at Old Hill, was being experienced in some degree by women working in the other factories as well. Within ten days of the line workers' dispute at Old Hill, all four of the West Midlands plants became involved in a second, much larger strike, which had, seemingly, a quite different cause.

#### The Bonus dispute

"Car'thave bonus under social contract. Let the Department of Employment do the stopping."

On Friday March 18th, 1977, a large contingent of shop floor workers at the Waterfall Lane factory downed tools, as did women on some of the final assembly lines at the other factories. On the following Monday (21st) output was halted at all four of the West Midlands



plants when the majority of women workers in each one stopped work. And full normal working was not resumed again until the end of that week.

The strikes had been triggered by the company paying out a bonus to the office staff. This was in line with their practice of the previous nine years and had been carried out with the Department of Employment's approval, and also in accordance with their guidelines which specified precisely how the payment should be made (in order to properly comply with the social contract). The shop floor workers took action in the first instance because they wanted a bonus as well. And, in general, their dispute could be seen as marking a long period of pent-up frustration; with pay held down as a consequence of union-agreed wage restraint, while the company's profits soared well beyond previous record levels. Indeed, this view of the strike - as a mass demonstration of protest against the social contract - was the one most commonly held. It was articulated by those male workers already gathering sufficient momentum to instigate the 'breaking' of Stage II later in the year. And it was the main explanation advanced by both union officials and company management.

It was curious, therefore, that the main body of strikers was made up of women workers who had had relatively little to say about the social contract prior to the strike, and beyond demanding the bonus added little on the subject during it. It was notable too, that with the possible exception of Waterfall Lane, most of the male workers appear to have continued to work normally throughout the week! Were there other explanations of the strike - particularly in relation to the women - which were given less prominence than the dominant view? This would seem to have been the case for wherever they found a relatively independent forum for discussion, it was clear that as far as the women

workers were concerned, the strikes punctuated a period of increased pressure - discipline and work intensification - on the shopfloor and sprang out of a mass of unresolved, production-related grievances.

Two meetings were held on the Friday, the day the stoppage began. At the first, an "emergency informal meeting", when the union officials and convenors met members of management, two notices were drafted by the company for dissemination to the shop floor. One set out the position regarding the bonus paid to staff. The other contained an agreement to resume discussions on the sick pay scheme and also movement of labour. ("Subject to the findings being able to be implemented") How had these particular items found their way onto the agenda?

Management were looking to make 'an offer to negotiate', which could be used to encourage an early return to work. But the most readily identifiable demand of the strikers concerned pay, and since this was disallowed under the social contract, other "allowable" demands had had to be identified before any offer to negotiate "on condition the strikers return" could be made.

Movement of labour was undoubtedly an issue of close concern - to the female membership especially. However, the most likely explanation for its immediate appearance on the agenda was that a number of male workers had recently suffered a loss of earnings as a result of shift changes which had been instituted at Waterfall Lane. Their convenor had been made well aware of their problems and, along with her colleagues, had been coming under pressure because of the lack of progress made in the long drawn-out and inconclusive negotiations being carried out at convenor level (see below) on arrangements regarding pay for workers moved.

The sick pay scheme, on the other hand, was put on the agenda by the union officials. It was an issue the membership had little awareness of at all, negotiations having been initiated by the full-time

officers and carried out exclusively between themselves and top management. Again, the issue had been long drawn out, but now the officers were anxious to have something to deliver to the membership in order to boost the union's credibility. (4)

At the meeting of shop stewards from all of the factories later the same day, the negotiating officer again posed sick pay as a 'demand' - although the main issues raised from the floor came from the men and concerned pay and the problem of the social contract. In the end it was decided to send a petition to the TUC calling for an end to incomes policy. But on the following Monday, although they came in to work, the majority of the female employees soon stopped again. This time output from all four factories was completely halted.

The full-time officer was on holiday, so it was the Regional Secretary who attended the meeting of shop stewards held in the afternoon on the first full day of the strike. Fuelled by the company's recently announced record profits and the consequent extra bonus paid to the staff, discussion ranged over the problem of how shop floor workers could get more money out of the company within the terms of the social contract. (5) The most coherent set of demands was put forward by one of the maintenance men. These derived from the series of meetings they had been holding over the previous months (see below).

- \* Representation at negotiating level for skilled workers.
- \* Staff status for maintenance personnel plus paid overtime and the annual bonus.
- \* Average earnings for holiday pay.
- \* Free overalls.
- \* All bonuses to be put onto holiday pay rates.
- \* A sick pay scheme paying average earnings.

And from the male pieceworkers came demands for relaxed piecework rates and average earnings for movement of labour. Since most of these demands were outside the social contract, it became a problem for the meeting to find a set of items on which to negotiate. It was not at

all clear on what basis an orderly return to work might, otherwise, be organised.

Male shop steward: " I propose they should go back while we negotiate"

Female shop steward: " Negotiate - what for?"

Male shop steward: "Negotiate for what we can get"

Female shop steward: "Its already been stated, there's nothing you can have"

Branch secretary: "That's not true, you can get a sick scheme and a pension scheme ..."  
(Boos)

The union officials had already made it clear that a full return to normal working was their precondition for taking up the members' demands at all. Nor would these be for negotiation in the first instance, since the conditional promise was only to take the demands, with management, to London for clearance from the Department of Employment.

The Regional Secretary declared that he had made a note of the main demands: "Movement of labour - we'll try to get them to do something. The skilled men - that's in the pipeline. There isn't anything else is there?". A meeting with the Department of Employment was arranged with management for the Wednesday, "in case Waterfall Lane don't go back tomorrow".

Normal working was not resumed by the women at any of the factories on the following day (Tuesday). Cheerful groups picketted the main gates turning away lorries. Most of the shop stewards were absent, having travelled by coach to London, bearing a petition against the social contract to the Union's head office. (6) The negotiating officer visited the Stourbridge factory and there discovered a meeting in progress between the factory management and some twenty female shopfloor workers.

The women were listing the main grievances underlying their strike. And, interesting to note, none of the items they mentioned, had been raised at all during the shop stewards' meeting of the previous day. A stream of complaints was being voiced directly at management: poor ventilation on the shop floor, movement of labour, absenteeism and above all the bad treatment of workers. Suggesting the managers should leave, the official began by outlining the benefits the workers had gained from the union. A pension and bereavement scheme, higher wages and, in the pipeline, a sick pay scheme. Again the women workers repeated their points. Working conditions were poor and the women were badly treated:

"The company has low schedules - its reflected in bad treatment of the workers. We are pushed around more and with less courtesy than ever".

"It's as if they're trying to MAKE you leave"

"We're moved about much more often - is a mobility agreement necessarily a 'transferability' agreement?"

"The girls have to put up their hands to go to the loo, they are allowed 2 minutes"

"We are poorly paid - and can't earn our money because of the bad parts. We cannot live on our wages".

The official suggested there should be a working party set up to investigate these problems. But a further subject of complaint was the union itself and, in particular, their own workplace organisation. The convenor was criticised for being autocratic and too sympathetic to management. There seemed little the members could do, Even the shop steward elections had not been held properly. (When balloting should have occurred as a matter of course, it had been decided representatives need only stand for re-election "if the members were not satisfied"). The union official could only suggest that since they elected their representatives, the answer lay in their own hands.

On the Wednesday normal working had still not been resumed and the planned trip to the Department of Employment had to be postponed. In three factories sections of sub-assembly had gradually taken up work again but at Waterfall Lane, most of the workers were still on strike on Thursday. The officials organised a secret ballot at this factory and finally, with a 75% vote in favour of a return, both they and the Industrial Relations Director departed, thankfully to London.

Five items were presented for decisions as to their 'allowability' under the terms of the social contract: payment of bonus to the hourly paid; payments to workers transferred; discretionary increments in the rate book (affecting skilled men); a sick pay scheme with the inclusion of bereavement. Of these; the bonus was 'disallowed', sick and bereavement pay 'allowed' and discretionary increments had to be 'off-set'. Payments made to workers transferred under movement of labour had to continue on whatever basis they had been made before.

The bargaining agenda between union officials and management was thus finally shaped, and negotiations began on three items: Movement of Labour, the Sick Pay Scheme and Bereavement Pay.

"The company agree to this meeting taking place  
subject to full normal working.  
We would request our members to work normally  
to allow these discussions to take place"  
(Notice to members from full-time officials  
28.3.1977).

As we go on to examine, the negotiations on movement of labour did not address in any significant way, the problems of the female membership.

Movement of labour disputes

We have previously seen how movement of labour was the cause of numerous problems for the women workers, undermining job security, job control and earnings. Despite this, the issue had little presence in the grievance procedure. Both this and the low degree of effective handling it received from shop stewards, could be related to management's determination to protect, and thus their refusal to negotiate, any aspect of this particular core feature of their production policy. This was facilitated by the union's endorsement of their aims in the joint agreement. The impact on the women workers was twofold. In the first place the preparedness of individuals and groups to press their grievances was clearly reduced; while at the same time, the actual practice of movement of labour itself could be seen as significantly diminishing their strength and, therefore, their ability to do so.

It has been maintained that the effect of this production practice, much enhanced by its incorporation as a substantive term in the agreement, was to facilitate the passing down of production costs engendered by fluctuating demand and uncertainty, onto the female section of the workforce in particular. This (re)distribution between employer and workforce had subsequently a disruptive impact on shopfloor relationships. This was because the costs then remained to be distributed within the ranks of the workers themselves, and the effect of the internal negotiations this engendered was to accentuate competition and lines of division between them.

These points can be illustrated by examining the course of a series of disputes which centred on the issue of labour mobility at Old Hill. And, to the extent that the union's negotiating officers had a particular interest in upholding the agreement, the processes by

which they did this and the impact of these processes on the union's domestic organisation and the position of the women workers within it, can also be identified.

#### WHO BEARS THE COST?

At the November 1976 branch meeting, movement of labour had (again) been raised by women members and the discussion was minuted thus:

"Once again the serious problem concerning the movement of labour was discussed at length, when it was felt that the full-time workers were getting a rough deal and that part-time workers were not having to take their full share when movement of labour was necessary. As the question of movement of labour was being discussed with Mr. Stuart and the convenors, it was agreed to leave it with the convenors to get the best possible deal for all members. It was vital that movement of labour be allowed to continue, otherwise we could be in a position like some industries where no work was available in some areas, lay-offs occur. It must be done, however, on a fair basis.

The convenors to negotiate with the company for average earnings or average for the job, whichever is the greater when movement of labour does take place". (Branch Minutes 30.11.1976).

The discussion had been instigated by a letter signed by 45 full-time women workers in sub-assembly, at the Old Hill factory. This had been given to the shop steward, who was herself a part-time (9.30 - 3.30) worker, representing both full and part-timers, on the sub-plate section. A gap between the issues being negotiated and the substance of the grievance is immediately obvious. The problem as stated concerned first, management's selection of workers to be moved, and the perception of a preference here detrimental to full-time workers. (Working a full day they were more likely to be moved off their jobs to fill gaps on the final assembly lines; while 9.30 - 3.30 workers were more likely to be left on the section). Second, the question of union/shop steward's support (of, presumably, both movement in principle and the criteria of selection), with finally, a proposal aiming to redress the balance in



favour of full-timers, and a demand for union 'backing'.

LETTER FROM SUB ASSEMBLY/WOMEN WORKERS AT OLD HILL  
FACTORY.

"In the union rule book nothing is stated 'full-time' or 'part-time' labour. Management and union reps apply movement of labour to full-time labour in preference to part-time labour.

If twilight shift, 9.30 - 3.30 shift have backing of the union about stopping on 'their jobs' now is the time full-time labour must have some backing and security. What is the point of the BSR employing only full-time labour when this full-time labour is to supplement the part-time labour.

Suggestion 1

Part-time labour, twilight shift must supplement full-time labour. Only as a last resort should full-time labour be taken off jobs. NOT while part-time labour is still working on same jobs. e.g. 8.0'clock worker taken off. 9.30 a.m. worker comes in and is left on, also twilight shift.

Suggestion 2

"Last in, first off", on over-manned section should only apply when twilight is stopped, then 9.30 - 3.30 and then full-time.

Reason: BSR have always employed part-time, which means this rule can only result in full-time labour losing jobs as they are last in on most sections. Since BSR policy of not employing part-time labour has only been in effect 12 months, the union must now in the rule book recognize full-time labour. If not, the BSR and union are defeating their own object of employing only full-time labour.

The members concerned had insisted that the item be brought up at the branch meeting, even when they were told that it would receive no support from the officials. "Paul says this is the best thing we've got in the agreement" (Branch Secretary). And the arguments of the latter were, indeed, once more made to prevail.

When the workforce as a whole began to be run-down in earnest in the new year ("we're losing about 40 per week"), labour mobility was stepped up (and this was particularly the case at Old Hill). "If they were bad managers - they would lay them off when there was no work ...

it's a protection". (Branch Secretary). But the demands of the women were to work shorter hours.

Meanwhile, problems for the full-time workers on sub-plates had become even more acute. The factory manager explained why:

"Its with the turn-over of labour, we've got an imbalance. Certain, easy, silly jobs - there's not much turn-over ... On sub-plates, where you've got slack values and they can pace themselves and the heaviest thing they pick up is a completed sub-plate - only 2lbs...

They're frightened they might be moved onto the main line. That's why they're doing this, trying to protect themselves. They don't want to be moved. But when I've just made a few alterations we'll change all that. I'm going to move them all permanently". Bert Long (Factory Manager).

This time an anonymous letter was sent to the Regional Secretary:

"With reference to running of the union at the above factory, we the authors of this letter would like if possible some help from you on the following grievances. Otherwise, we shall be forced to join a union that will help.

(1) Part-time shop stewards who allow themselves to be intimidated by the management and refuse to back up members.

(2) Foremen and production superintendents who when reminded of the agreement between the management and union say that as far as they are concerned we may as well burn it, because they do not work by it.

(3) The fact that part-timers are treated better than full-time, for example movement of labour. Full-timers are moved about like Jack-in-the-boxes, but no part-timers are even asked to work elsewhere.

Please do not send Mr. Paul Silver if you intend to help us, because whenever he has been here before nothing has been done. That is why we are sending this letter to you.

Thank you in anticipation,  
Yours truly,  
Fed-up union members of BSR.

Again, the matter was raised at the branch. The minutes for

February 1977 record:

"Movement of labour: once again this problem was raised and a heated discussion took place. This matter was at convenor level". (Branch Minutes 24.2.77).

The full-time women workers on the sub-plate section at Old Hill had been demanding that part-time workers should be moved first to fill in 'gaps' on the lines. And also that the evening (twilight-shift) should be stopped altogether if there was insufficient demand for components, such that day-workers had to be moved off their sections. But the problems of the twilight shift workers in respect of movement of labour and the degree of protection they felt they received from the union - were, if anything, even greater. And it had been the complaints of this group of evening workers (at the Waterfall Lane factory) which had, in fact, put the item back onto the branch agenda, in February.

"Maybe movement of labour is to be carried out in all factories, but surely, this could be put into perspective. When a girl that has worked on a job for months or years and then moved to another job, without being told for how long. It does not seem fair, when they could bring the girls who were originally doing the job back.

It seems as though the girls on the 5.15 p.m. - 9.30 p.m. shift are getting a raw deal. Perhaps, it is because these girls can only do these hours.(management) realise this, also this is why we are used as the 'buffer shift'. To suit management 'once again'.

How far does the union think it can push these girls? All factories have their own set of rules and regulations. Who has negotiated ours? And accepted them. Surely rules such as these can be used amongst management and chargehands. Is there one set of rules for one shift and another for the white collar workers?".  
(Branch Minutes 24.2.1977).

A month later the final assembly lines at Old Hill were on strike because of the shortage of labour leading to regular breaking of the lines, and the loss of earnings due to bad parts. This was scarcely 'resolved' before all of the factories erupted with the 'bonus dispute' with again, movement of labour close to the heart. As a result of this strike, the issue had been forced onto the

negotiating table at an 'official' bargaining level at last. But here discussions were restricted to the matter of payment. Management's terms for agreement were clearly stated and conceded, as the full-time officer's notes for the meeting records:

"Company must be able to select who moves if this agreement is to be made". (7)

The problems, therefore, remained with the women workers on the shop floor. And within a month of the issue's so-called 'final settlement', there was a strike in sub-assembly at Old Hill.

The full-time officers first met 'informally' 9 of the women workers from the section, accompanied by their shop steward. The officials explained how the 'buffer-shift' system and the movement of labour agreement were supposed to ensure that there would be no need for lay-offs. The women in turn explained how there were 135 workers on sub-plates, six part-time (9.30 - 3.30) and 3 full-time lines with 15 workers on each. The full-time workers were being moved onto the main lines because their work was no longer required in the same quantity - they had, in fact, been prevented from starting work on their usual jobs in the morning.

"Linda started. Bert Long said, 'stop greasing - you've got no job ...'. He said, 'I'm the manager here and from Monday you don't EXIST. And if you carry on I'll stop the work'.

They're even taking girls OFF the main lines to put us on because they promised us a sitting-down job. But we don't want this".  
Betty (Sub-Assembly).

The officials insisted the women agree to a 'temporary transfer' without loss of earnings. (On their own jobs these workers achieved the highest levels of performance in the factory at 125). But the women refused. "If we move, we're half agreeing to what the company wants us to do". Moreover the workers on the main lines were prepared

to support their action as they too "were fed up with being messed about endlessly - their shop-stewards have already told us they won't have us ....."

The officials had found themselves able to arrange a meeting at Stage 5 (with the industrial relations director, Tony Stuart), cutting short the procedure. The (part-time) shop steward from sub-plates attended along with two of the full-time workers (also 'out of procedure').

The opening negotiations between management and full-time officers concerned the terms of negotiating and this immediately entailed concessions by the union side; which in turn had to be 'negotiated' with the membership (on this occasion, at the official's elbow).

Tony Stuart (industrial relations director)

"I said this morning - make it temporary then - but I must insist that we do get this ... We'll have 'temporary' then I'll sit down and meet you".

Paul Silver (union official)

"Have they moved or not? I don't want to discuss it before they move on a temporary basis either".

So the first main discussion was a sharp exchange between the full-time official and the two women members who were putting him under pressure to negotiate what was manifestly, from the officials' point of view, an 'unwanted grievance'.

The two women members 'unofficially' representing their colleagues along with the 'official' shop steward, responded that the girls would not move unless they had an assurance in writing that the transfer was temporary.

Paul Silver: "I'm not writing anything down. Once I've said it's on a temporary basis then the girls must move".

Tony Stuart: "It's not up to the trade union to give notices in writing - he's said he's prepared to negotiate".

(Adjournment: Tony Stuart leaves).

Paul Silver: "Until the girls move ....."

Shop Steward: "They won't ...."

Paul Silver: "Well hard luck then".

The women explained that:

"the girls are frightened if they move temporarily, they'll be split up and not get back together again".

And they thought that if they moved the industrial relations director and union officials would refuse to meet. They had no confidence in the union: "Give them a letter!" The official explained that he had already put himself out on their behalf.

"We've got two operators in on the discussion - which is most extraordinary ... I went to the Secretary of State to get this agreement (on earnings for movement of labour). I'm seeing it sticks. I'm not putting it in writing. I've got 9,000 to look after. How can I do that for you?"

The women played their final card:

Val (Shop Steward): "Please explain what the women say about the union"

Phyllis: "Well you know - there's another union who can come in and negotiate for us ..."

Eileen: "No other union would allow this ..."

Paul Silver: "Don't threaten me! If you're not satisfied you complain to Jim Mason or David Basnett. We've got 9 stage 5's out-standing. We shouldn't even be DOING your case."

Finally, and reluctantly, the women went back to persuade their colleagues to move. On their return the meeting re-started. Three sets of interests were being negotiated here. We begin with management's.

MANAGEMENT'S POSITION:

"This company survives or dies by movement of labour".  
(Tony Stuart)

The starting point was clearly stated. At present they were building for stock, not taking any workers on and they needed to use movement of labour. "We're not prepared to have people sitting around clocking up waiting-hours". At present they did not need such a high output - it had fallen to around 64,000 units per week from a more 'normal' level of 70,000. (8) The policy (of dropping the output while retaining the pace - not stated) using 'natural wastage' to reduce the number of workers, had brought problems of imbalance because labour-loss was fastest on the main-lines and slowest in sub-assembly - especially on the better-paid sections like sub-plates where the highest performances could be achieved. As a result too many sub-plates were being produced. Management wanted to reduce the number of lines there from 9 to 7, using the labour to fill-in the gaps in final-assembly. Where, as a result of the recent stoppages in this area - they had also agreed to provide a proper complement of 'floats' so that the women could go to the lavatory during the day. They needed full-time workers to do this. They had already taken out one of the three full-time sub-plate lines and now they wanted to take out another. When full-time women dug their heels in, the part-time lines had agreed to move on alternate days with them. But this was less satisfactory for management who were arguing for a 'permanent' transfer. On length of service this would mean line 3. But they had all flatly refused to go - even to 'take their turn' on a temporary basis - since they well knew they would never be allowed to return.

Paul Silver: "When will you need them all back?"

Tony Stuart: "When we're on the 70,000 mark ..."

Paul Silver: "You anticipate getting back to that output level?"

Tony Stuart: "When will we want them? Crystal ball stuff.  
But will we ever get them?

Every year bar 1974-1975 we've had a rush getting into August. We usually see the signs now, though the worry is - we haven't yet ... We certainly expect a Christmas rush to materialise".

Bert Long: "I don't think we'll ever get the line performances up again anyway".

Within the requirements set out by management, the union officials sought to find a means of getting their members back to work. The only possible solution involved some section of the membership having to bear the 'cost'. What was actually being negotiated from now on was which group could be most easily made to do so.

#### THE UNION OFFICIAL'S POSITION.

"What's the solution to this one? Whatever I do can't be right". (Paul Silver).

The first proposal from the union official was that - since the girls would not accept a permanent transfer - the fairest solution was to agree a rota. But this shifted the burden onto the women on the main lines - who would continuously have to work with 'green' labour. When this was pointed out the regional official was immediately mindful of the recent stoppage by workers on final assembly and their present deliberate, lower performance levels. ("We do accept the problems of the main lines"). So the other 'solution' - possibly acceptable to the sub-plate workers - of a temporary transfer with average earnings, was also put out of court. This was because performance levels were lower on the main lines and nothing irritated the workers there more than having their own performances lowered by the introduction of



inexperienced workers who were, at the same time, being paid higher wages. (At a level of performance that was, in any case, unattainable in final assembly).

The direction of cost distribution reverted back to the sub-plate workers again. Who was to go? Select a few workers from each of the full-time lines? Select one of the lines as a whole? How to choose? Management stepped in quickly with a warning that this discussion threatened to encroach on their prerogatives:

Paul Silver: "Why can't we take 4 off each line rather than 12 off one line ..."

Tony Stuart: "We're talking now about methods of selection..."

Paul: (Changing the subject) "The girls like the jobs on sub-plates ..."

Bert Long: "So would I if I had it. It's the daftest job on the floor."

But, of course, none of these 'solutions' were acceptable to the women - this was after all, what they were on strike about.

Paul Silver: "Move them onto other jobs and move those workers onto the lines ..."

It was pointed out that labour was already being drafted onto the main lines from all areas of the factory.

Paul Silver: "Have you asked any of the 9.30 - 3.30 workers to go full-time"

Val: "No-one would. They all want to get ON TO that shift. Not off it.

Paul: "Draw lots to move"

Eileen: "No. The other lines would kick up worse. Some have been here 8 years".

Before seeing how the union official resolved the issue, we need to look at the arguments of the women who were affected:

THE MEMBERS' POSITION

Paul: "The company's need and OUR need is that we should fill in the lines. Because we agreed this last week".

Eileen: "But if 9 move and 7 leave - what happens - they go back to another 7 - and so it goes on".

The women's arguments against moving were based on three fundamental points - the protection of employment, earnings and job controls. In the main they addressed these arguments to the union officials.

The job on the main lines was harder, more demanding and stressful work. It was also lower paid. Performances here varied between 100 and 108, while on sub-plates the women could get 125, paying £50.50p. The difference (at 12½p per point) was £2 - £3 per week.

"I've got a mortgage £102 per month and three babies. My old man's a bus driver - he works day and night ... out of £50 I take home £36 or £37". (Eileen)

A bigger problem, however, was that a number of the women in sub-assembly could not cope with the job on the main lines. They would be forced to leave:

"Betty's got arthritis. Eileen's got asthma. 7 out of 9 of us 've got to leave - because they can't do the job". (Phyllis).

The need to protect themselves extended, crucially, to their position in the labour process itself in ways we have already discussed concerning job control. Here, taking precedence over the preservation of individual worker's practical skills and experience, was stability in terms of their internal relationships, because herein lay the core of their controls and their collective strength (i.e. their bargaining resources). The women argued vehemently against both management's and the union official's suggestions that a few workers should be taken off each line:

"Those 15 women are like one person producing -  
the 15 are all producing one sub-plate"  
(Val)

"The girls are frightened if they move 'temporarily'  
they'll be split up and not get back together".

The suggestion that selection from each line should be made  
on length of service did not make it any better.

Paul Silver: "It's a normal union principle: last in first out"

Eileen: "Where's that in writing?"

Paul: "It's not put in writing. It's a union principle"

Eileen: "Well, it's not like that here".

On the basis of seniority, Phyllis would not, in fact have had to  
move off her job. But she volunteered to do so - if her whole team  
could go onto a main line together. This time her arguments ran up  
against management. Because they were both talking about the same  
issue - job control:

Tony Stuart: "Take 7 from line 8 and 7 from line 3 and re-group.  
We've discussed all ways and it must come back  
to the company selecting".

Phyllis: "How about taking a whole line and putting them all  
together on a main line, and training them up ?  
Leave it to us to get the speed up - I'll move. Line  
7 is only half a (main) line - there's only 35 on.  
Move the 35 and put my team on. That's a permanent  
way and the girls will accept that".

Bert Long: "That's not the object of the exercise - which is,  
to fully <sup>man</sup> existing main lines, so that they  
have the normal number of floats"

Phyllis: "No-one will be frightened then, 'cos they can go at  
their own speed. That's what's frightening them".

Bert Long: "At the moment, they're sitting alongside an  
experienced girl. And the experienced girl won't  
be moved 'till she's competent". (9)

Like the union officials, the women themselves were forced to  
consider 'solutions' which entailed passing the 'costs' of mobility  
onto another group of women workers. The divisive impact of this process  
of internal distribution was quite clear.

"Move line 3 - they don't do half our work - they're the worst line on the section - the worst for performance and for absentees"

But line 3 had been the main cause of 'trouble' in the first place, and management were chary about exacerbating this. They also had longer seniority than line 8.

Phyllis: "Take a twilight shift off - they do 1,100 per night"

Paul: "Take two 9.30 - 3.30 lines off"

Bert Long: "We'd meet the same problem"

The industrial relations director's observation that the union-side seemed to have an approach which saw the part-time workers as inferior prompted a curious discussion about the way the 9.30 - 3.30 shift was being "abused" by the workers.

Phyllis: "It was brought in for wives with young children, but everyone on its a grandparent - Val is!"

Bert Long: " ....At the time it was a good move - when we couldn't get the labour. But now its totally ineffective. So since I've been manager we've not started any more. ... they all want to get on that shift".

Eileen: "It's been abused"

Val: "No! You can't say to them - just 'cos you've a grown family, you're to go full-time"

After the discussion had gone round in circles a few more times, the women began to pose questions about what would happen next.

Eileen's proposal that "someone who's not involved with unions or management" should be brought in, was quickly countered by the

Industrial Relations Director, who also stalled on the question of taking the issue up at the next stage of procedure; which would involve the company Chairman. The issue was simply not negotiable at this level. Strictly, it was not negotiable at any level at all.

So the union official posed the alternatives: either they would have to call the 9 women (with least service) in, "and tell them there was

nothing we can do"; or "we register a failure to agree and go to stage 6 - the Chairman". His solution which he put to the women was for them to ask management "to leave it as a temporary transfer" and to "ask for a stage 6". The Branch Secretary missed the implications of this and was clearly worried by the proposal of continuing, not only to negotiate the issue, but also to take it up higher in the procedure.

"What about the other groups - the other factories ... But we'd have to look at the whole lot. Where do we end, taking movement of labour to stage 6? Every single one will come up! And if you widen it ...!"

But the implications were not lost on the workers.

Eileen: "Meanwhile, we'll have to leave!"

Paul: "Don't leave"

Phyllis: "Betty's got a slipped disc and arthritic legs ... Stage 6 - it could take months?"

They asked again for the assurance about the transfer being temporary to be written on a paper to show the other workers. The official refused, "suggest they come in for a quick natter". And then it was clear, that the game was up:

"We can't now. They're all scattered" (Val)

Once the women had agreed to move they had won their point of getting the negotiators to meet, but they had lost the means of winning their case. And with the suggestion that the whole issue ought to be taken up at a higher level in order to be resolved (which was true) but without the means of ensuring it would be - they were finally beaten.

Phyllis: "The part-timers will say - told you so. Told you you'd have to go on the main lines".

Paul: "You might as well go. I can't see a solution"

Phyllis: "If it went to stage 6, would I be able to see Mr Ferguson?"

Paul: "No - only convenors".

The union official asked for the two girls to be paid for the time spent in the meeting. The factory manager, who had also missed the point, quibbled: "If we pay them for this morning I can guarantee we'll get a lot more of this nonsense". The two experienced negotiators had the last word:

Paul: ".... We've widened discussion so neither the company nor the union'll be embarrassed by a dispute over movement of labour. So if you're not prepared to pay them ...."

Tony: "Leave it".

Two days later the deputy convenor at the Old Hill factory visited the branch office with some sick notes. He reported that two girls had run off the lines the previous day. He'd seen them in the personnel office writing a pass-out - Betty, who'd got a bad back, and Eileen, with asthma and a bad back. He didn't know what had happened afterwards. He agreed with the Branch Secretary, "there's not much you can do, is there?". "No".

MRS GENNARD AND MRS HINGELY.

"It was agreed everything possible had been done for the two ladies". (Branch Committee Minutes 26.5.1977).

Three weeks later management were wanting to move workers into the press shop because they were short of main-plates. They selected four from sub-plates and four from the pick-up arm sections in sub-assembly.

The shop steward tried to protect her members and the Industrial Relations Director complained to the Branch Secretary about it. She was causing some dissatisfaction:

"She's been here 14 years odd (she kept harking back to Macdonald's day). 'Oh - once they were moved then they never came back.' I tried to explain - it wasn't like that. We couldn't carry on in the same way etc". (Tony Stuart).

Two of the workers who were sister-in-laws, had supported each other and refused to move.

"They are adamant - they won't go in. They've had some bad accidents on the big presses in the family, so they're frightened."  
(Irene, Convenor) (10).

The steward had argued strongly on behalf of her members, so:

"We found them some nice cushy jobs in inspection. But would you believe it? Those girls STILL weren't satisfied - after we'd done all that running around ...." Tony Stuart.

The convenor had got the factory manager to agree that it was "only" movement of labour where before it had been a permanent transfer. But the distinction made no difference to the women, who even refused management's request to do the job "for just two weeks - to build up stock to keep the lines going".

The problem had been caused in the first place as a result of the workers' responses to management's attempts to intensify the workload during falling demand - by restricting output. This was also a 'protection' against mobility because sections "over-producing" were broken down. Falling performances following the strike on the main lines had been generalised: women in the press shop had dropped theirs from 105 to 90, causing stocks to fall and making it difficult for management to keep the main lines fully supplied. In order to break these controls over their work pace, management required a team of new workers on the job (note how they were being drawn from separate sections) who would not, immediately, be in a position to control their output in the same kind of way.

But Mrs Gennard and Mrs Hingely refused to be moved. Apart from their fear of the presses, one of them suffered from dermatitis and could not wear the gloves which were necessary either on the presses or in inspection. Finding a basis of mutual support in their family as well as their working relationship, these two women were unusually persistent. They came to work each day, sitting at their old jobs waiting to begin: "They're sat there, doing nothing - and refused to move all week!" (Tony Stuart).

Such a long stand was unprecedented and the convenor - somewhat at a loss - brought the matter up at a Branch Committee Meeting. (The only occasion the minutes record the issue being raised on this body).

"They're not being paid. They're coming in again at 1.15 today - I don't know what to do. The procedure is exhausted ..."  
Irene (Convenor).

Faced with this 'everyday' problem - suddenly so starkly posed by the unusual actions of these two women, the shopstewards found themselves perplexed.

Keith (Shop steward):  
(Toolroom)

"Is there still work available on their own job?"

Irene (Convenor):  
(Old Hill)

"Yes ... Now it's only movement of labour, where before it was 'permanent transfer'. I don't know whether to tell them to go home or what ..."

Ettie (Convenor, Waterfall Lane):

"It's not your job. You wait till the company sends them and then fight for their jobs back"

However, the Branch Secretary argued that the agreement should be up-held: "You'll never be able to suit everyone". The implications began to dawn on the shopsteward from the toolroom as if for the first time:



Keith: "What you're saying is - they should get a two-day suspension and be sent down the road!"

Mary West (Branch Secretary) "Oh no!"

Keith: "Well what?"

Irene: "Well, I'll tell them to go ..."

Ettie: "Oh no!"

Mary: "You have - a shop steward has - to stick to the movement of labour agreement and use the procedure. When she's completed negotiations, she must walk away and say, 'I'm sorry, I've done what I can', and go to the next job".

Keith: "And when they're sent off, all the sections will go with them!"

Mary: "But we can't make a special case - we can't have privileges .."

Keith: "So there's been an agreement between union and management over the movement of labour, and there's nothing anyone can do about it?"

The union had brought out a booklet, "The Law at Work". Wasn't there something in there about 'constructive dismissal'?

"It doesn't apply. We've got a movement of labour agreement. The company say - we didn't agree to that book". (Branch Secretary).

Once again, there was 'no solution'.

Irene: "I'll tell the women I've exhausted procedure and there's nothing more I can do for them. Now it's up to them. They keep asking for Paul Silver".

Mary: "They can't have Paul Silver. He made the agreement. The only alternative to movement of labour is constant lay-offs".

Trevor: "And if we allowed that, we wouldn't be doing our job" (Branch Chair)

The Minutes of this meeting recorded the outcome;

"The committee agreed and recommended that there must be no special cases on movement of labour clause. It was agreed that everything possible had been done for the two ladies by the convenor". Branch Committee 26.5.1977.

### Conclusions

We opened this chapter with the observation by Carter Goodrich that trade unions "institutionally" had little to do with 'production' as averse to 'consumption' areas of disputed control between employer and worker. We have stated our interest in explaining further the links between these and also the implications for both workers and their unions, of institutionalising priority of the one (consumption) sphere over the other (production).

Goodrich, like others who were inspired by the shop stewards' movement, reflected on the impact of workers' attempts to incorporate production control demands within an organisational context - during a period when their bargaining power had been greatly increased as a result of wartime conditions. He concluded:

"The movement won its chief support by appeals to simple and very practical war-time issues; its chief effect may possibly be in the field of trade union structure" Goodrich (1975) p.10

Herding examined more closely the impact of job controls on trade union structure - similarly noting the "mis-fit" of the institution in relation to these, which had been so dramatically highlighted by the 'democratising' challenge of the war-time movement. He notes that even today, workers' experience has been

"... that in order to make progress at the level of command over the workplace, they had to fight the union (which they still identified as holding their side in labour-management conflict in any issue) either before or along with the company". Herding (1972) p.302

And that:

"Battling the union at one time or another, is the tall order facing the revolts; even when overcoming the barrier they have to retain, not lose, the gains of the past and bargaining power for the future". ibid. p.300.

In our case studies we have shown the problems which arose for the women workers at BSR when they attempted to challenge management's production policy through the union's representational and bargaining structures. Even when the earlier problems we have identified in terms of important issues not being raised as grievances or taken up at appropriate bargaining levels had been overcome as a consequence of the members taking industrial action, this was, in fact, almost the limit of the women's success.

As we shall see in the next chapter, in contrast to male workers who forced access to the bargaining table in a similar kind of way, when they finally got there, the women found themselves faced with still further obstacles to negotiation - which it would, apparently, require an even greater scale of action to overcome. They were, therefore, currently unable to prevent the underlying problems being pushed back down to lower bargaining levels or to alter the fact that the only issue which was going to be negotiated at the level they had achieved, were the stoppages themselves.

We would argue that this was partly a consequence of the women workers' lack of bargaining strength in relation to both management and their own organisation, (for which movement of labour was significantly responsible). But as we have noted, the relative 'weakness' of any group has to be assessed in terms of the 'strength' required. Clearly the organisational and bargaining resources necessary to dispute production issues with management on the one hand and to re-shape their own institutional structures on the other, were considerable - why did the women not pursue 'easier' 'consumption' demands - concerning pay and (environmental) conditions? As we have also seen in Chapter 13 they did, in fact, do so. But it is also the case that the women met opposition in the area of 'reward' distribution from the male membership which significantly diminished the extent of the gains they might have made.

If institutional structures are already fashioned more appropriately for 'compensation' (Herding) or 'consumption' (Goodrich) bargaining than production or job control - to the extent that they actually militate against the latter - what are the implications of this? We would argue that job controls underpin bargaining resources necessary for negotiating in either sphere. And the relatively greater 'strength' of some groups of the male workers - especially in relation to management, the female membership and the union - reflected in their relatively greater success in 'compensation' bargaining, is an illustration of this.

We have suggested that in a number of respects, compensation for workers is gained at the expense of job or production controls; and, institutionally, at the expense of the means for developing and maintaining these. In terms of the workplace and bargaining relationships we have described at BSR therefore, we can further propose that much of the male workers' gains were made at the expense of the women workers' organisational and bargaining strength.

In the next chapter, we examine some of the male workers' disputes, which, in contrast to the women, were mainly concerned with compensatory or consumption aspects, i.e. the distribution of 'reward'. And we can identify more closely, some significant features of this 'more mainstream' trade union activity at workplace level.

Chapter 14:

Footnotes

- (1) Field notes: Ref 9.3.1977/176.
- (2) Field notes: Ref 9.3.1977.
- (3) The stewards did, unusually, manage to extract a written assurance that when work picked up, those moved would be given the choice to return. It is most unlikely that such an assurance would have been given if the stoppage had not taken place.
- (4) The strikes appeared to come completely out of the blue, but the membership's dissatisfaction with the union was well known. As the regional secretary commented: "Irene came in on Saturday, saying people wanted to drop out of the Union. I told her if they did, let them, and then go in and get the company to sack 'em. She had no idea this was coming off though". Jim Mason (Regional Secretary) Ref: 21.3.1977/231.
- (5) The bonus was paid in December on an estimated profit figure of £20m. The year-end profits were £29m so an extra payment was therefore due.
- (6) "This is to confirm that 50 shop stewards from the Midland factories of BSR Ltd were at the Head Offices of the Union today and held a meeting with David Basnett, the General Secretary.  
  
The shop stewards discussed with David Basnett the problems of the membership. David Basnett said that the Union could not support any action by the members to break the social contract - but did assure the shop stewards that he would report on the meeting to the Executive of the Union".  
Jim Mason (Regional Secretary) 22.3.1977.
- (7) Negotiations: "First conference following strike" 29.3.77. Apart from movement of labour, the other two items on the agenda were sick pay and bereavement pay.
- (8) The highest output from this factory in the previous year had been 76,500 units per week. The highest ever had been 83,000 per week (achieved four years' earlier).
- (9) The 'experienced' girls on either side of the inexperienced one exerted a strong driving effect. They were not doing the same tasks, so the possibility of assistance was not the aim.
- (10) Ref 26.5.77/356.

CHAPTER 15 CONTROL IN THE BARGAINING PROCESS : DISPUTING THE  
DISTRIBUTION OF 'BENEFITS'.

In Chapter 8 we examined some important implications of the sexual division of labour and the sexist ideology underpinning its inequality, from the men's point of view. This was to try to show how it resulted in the male workers' problems, interests and experiences being structured differently to those of the women. One consequence was identified in the quite particular conception that the men had of the female workers' problems and interests. And some of the implications of this, in terms of the kind of recognition, priority or support accorded to these issues were discussed. A further consequence which was identified concerned the men's greater facility for sustaining job controls and collective organisation.

The main internal sources of this greater facility arose from differences in the organisation of the labour process as it affected the male workers and also in the different nature of their authority relationships with both the women workers and management. While there were variations in the way these aspects affected men in different sections and skill groups, such features as (a relatively greater) physical mobility, job 'ownership' or entitlement, freedom from discipline-based driving, scope for discretion in work performance, and also for social interaction, characterised in general the position of the male workers in the labour process compared with that of the women.

What consequences flowed from the male workers having more resources and hence greater bargaining power than the women? This important question will be examined in this Chapter through the use of case studies in order to analyse how such resources were used. And to identify

what the processes were by which some groups of male workers in particular were able to succeed in not only promoting their own interests, but also in influencing the extent to which others could do likewise.

In our examination of the 'craftsmen's agreement' we saw how the maintenance and toolroom workers were engaged in bargaining with the employer, their own full-time officers and their co-workers/members. As a consequence of their stronger bargaining position in relation to all three, they succeeded in gaining priority for their interests in the representational structures and control over the bargaining agenda. We have suggested that to the extent that the interests of these workers contradicted those of others (for example the women) in respect of pay ('equality' versus differentials) or work-rate ('the size of the cake'), yet were made to prevail over them, the union machinery was rendered unresponsive to the latter. As a further consequence of this, the employer's interests were all the more easily imposed. Our argument here has been that the absorption of 'costs' (employer's interest) by any section of the workforce is never without effect, the tendency being to weaken the group's bargaining position and reduce the bargaining resources at their disposal. Our approach is, therefore, to examine the impact of unequal bargaining resources between different sections of the workforce, not only in terms of the outcome vis a vis the employer, but also in relation to the (subsequent) position of various groups of workers on the one hand and the institutional structures of bargaining and interest representation on the other.

The first question we need to ask is perhaps, what was the basis of the men's greater bargaining resources?

#### POSITION IN THE LABOUR PROCESS AND PRODUCTION RELATIONSHIPS

Although inextricably linked to the men's relative strength in the labour market generally, we are particularly interested in their stronger position at the workplace itself. So to begin with, we will identify, at a general level (that is, bearing in mind variations between the men) those resources which derived from the male workers' position in the labour process broadly contrasted with that of the women.

While other features, such as the crucial positioning of a process within the production system may serve to enhance bargaining power, we would argue that bargaining resources are fundamentally embedded in job control. And insofar as a central component of this is the regulation of work effort, it can be seen that the male workers were, in general, better placed than the women.

Looking first at their position in the production process; very few male workers were tied to highly interdependent, repetitive, rapid flow-line jobs. In terms of, for example, the use of discretion, physical mobility and especially, time, much of the work done by the men was characterised by more space - in every sense. In other words the sections of the labour process they occupied were "more porous", while those of the women were "more dense".

If we turn next to examine the different position of male and female workers in terms of relationships in the labour process, a similar kind of point can be made.

We have already seen that the women's relationships with each other were structured by distinctive patterns of co-operation in the labour process. We noted, in particular, the strong pressure to maintain consistent levels of output which was exerted through them being part



of a very closely integrated system of co-operation with few "boundaries" or "buffers" inbetween. Whatever action was taken by one group quickly affected a very large number and it was difficult to control the scope of impact. Apart from the fact that the men were far less closely tied to each other by interdependent working, the particular nature of their relationship with the women workers was another source of 'space'. Obviously, in some areas the work of the men depended on that of the women in a fairly direct way - for example in the warehouse at the end of the final assembly line. But significant groups of males were 'indirect' workers and their relationship with the women was mediated in various respects. Taking the maintenance and toolroom workers as an example (the 'strongest' group), it can be seen how this relationship could be to their advantage. If the women stopped work these men could continue - often more work, rather than less, being 'available' to them. On the other hand, if the men stopped or slowed down, the extent to which the women might feel the impact remained to some degree, under the men's control. This was important because, if the women (few or many) began to lose money, this could sometimes put the men under more immediate pressure than the management. So this was something the latter also attempted to control.

Finally, if we look at the authority relationship with management - distinctive features of the men's and women's position again emerge. (Which is not to deny that there were also differences between different groups of the men particularly along age and skill lines). Certainly, however, the adult male workers were not subjected to the same degree of disciplining or to movement of labour, either generally or selectively

applied. Individually, therefore, they were more secure in their jobs.(1) They were also better able to regulate their expenditure of effort and protect against intensification since the boundaries and content of their work were both relatively well defined and known.

Most important of all perhaps, collectively, the various groups of male workers were better able to sustain their levels of regulation through established patterns of control because the social relationships which underpinned these were subjected to far less disruption from any source.

Viewed broadly, therefore, structural differences which arose from the men's position in the labour process can be identified in three main areas. That is; in relation to the nature of the work itself and the time and "space" available; the relationships between workers which evolved through the system of co-operation; and the impact of such managerial strategies as disciplining and movement of labour. The balance of these differences meant that male workers could maintain a higher degree of job control and sustain stronger, more stable work groups. This in turn meant that they had greater bargaining resources - since these could be more easily generated and maintained. The men also had greater scope to use these.

What impact did this structured difference in bargaining strength and resources have on the union's domestic organisation?

We will now go on to explore the main processes through which certain groups of the men did attempt to promote their interests via the collective bargaining machinery; although with differing degrees of success.

The first case study concerns a group of 'BSR-skilled' male setters who tried and failed to make a sectional gain, but succeeded with a more general issue/demand. The second case involves a group of male toolroom workers who bargained successfully for a (sectional) improvement in their conditions (specifically - staggered holidays). And the third case details the maintenance men's dispute which led to their successful claim (along with the toolroom workers) for increased differentials. The contrast between the two groups - 'BSR-skilled' and the 'tradesmen' - raises many points of relevance in relation to the women workers, in terms of whom, the differences in the features identified were immeasurably greater.

While touching on a number of different aspects, overall, these case studies show how and with what effects, the collective bargaining process and the machinery sustained by the trade union organisation are subordinated to the function of controlling the distribution of costs and benefits. Essentially, the scope (who is involved), content (what is negotiated) and timing of this. They allow us to see how distribution in general, and these aspects in particular, are fundamentally determined by institutional means; being affected by the levels of bargaining, the channels of negotiation available and the positions of representatives/negotiators in the structure. As a result, these become not simply a means of bargaining but in crucial respects, the subject of it as well. In every case we find bargaining over substantive issues is combined with bargaining over the institutional structure and process. And because this is so closely linked to the question of access to negotiation, it can, for some groups become

a prior question, completely subordinating the substantive issues originally at stake.

The clearest illustration of this 'dual' process in collective bargaining can be seen in relation to the struggles over representation in general and the convenorship in particular, which related in a complex way to both the processes of negotiation internal to the work-force and the bargaining which took place with the employer. And in the case studies we can see more clearly how the structure of representation - who is represented and at what level - is as much the outcome or determination of prior bargaining processes as it is also a 'determinator' of these.

We begin by looking at the dispute concerning male workers (in the skilled grade) who worked in the automatic-machine shop (known as the auto-shop) at the Old Hill factory. This case study illustrates how the use by management and union officials of institutional mechanisms to control the 'progressing' of the mens' demands (particularly in relation to their access to appropriate levels of negotiation) led to these becoming the predominant focus of the latter's bargaining effort. We begin to see also, that a number of different bargaining channels exist (or can be established) and management, officials and members strive to utilise these to their own advantage. The most marked difference in bargaining channels can be seen to lie between those recognised as "official" and operated according to the established procedure (here referred to as 'inside' channels); and those we would deem "unofficial" because they involve various departures from this (here referred to as 'outside' channels). Finally, this case study illustrates how, why and with what effect, the question of representation could become a key bargaining issue.

The auto-shop men's dispute

The men in the auto-shop wanted more pay. Like everyone else in 1977, they chafed under the Government's restrictions and looked for ways to increase their earnings. In particular they had been asking the company to guarantee weekend overtime working. But five weeks before Christmas, when delivery orders had been completed and the units being built were going for stock, the Chairman sent out a memo: no more workers to be taken on and overtime to be cut. Leading-hands and setters in the auto-shop responded by refusing to do certain fitting or maintenance work which they had carried out in overtime as part of the routine of operating the multi-spindle machines - unless they were given extra money for doing it. And an overtime-ban was instituted in response to the cut rota.

A certain amount of moral indignation on both sides accompanied this dispute. The men felt that management, who constantly pleaded that they were "most regretfully" tied by pay policy and could do nothing, should demonstrate their goodwill by making an effort, at least, to look for ways of giving the men more money. On the employer's side, the industrial relations director was indignant that, having recently conceded a status quo clause (shortly to be included in the "blue book"), the men should immediately be refusing to operate it. He was not inclined even to negotiate with the union official on this dispute unless the men "stopped breaking the agreement".

On Friday 21st January the men stopped work because five of them had been paid 72p less that week as a result of the action being taken. The female operators in the department went home. Officials and management hurried over to meet the men and their two stewards, Chris representing the setters and Roy the male machine operators. (Female

operators had their own steward, Pat). But the leading hands and setters refused to return to status quo. And on the Monday Roy went to ACAS for information about the men's entitlements.

The union officials had already made one attempt to head-off this dispute by agreeing to hold an informal 'clinic'. Their practice of meeting disaffected sections (frequently disavowed in public) nevertheless failed on this occasion. They had arranged to meet the auto-shop men in a pub one evening to hear their grievances and try to persuade them to return to normal working. Nobody turned up. The Branch secretary had sent the message through Irene, the convenor: either it had not been passed on, or the men had decided to boycott the meeting.

The convenor's position had become increasingly difficult as the actions of this small group threatened to lose more money for the operatives, many of whom were women who did not work overtime at all. She was also aware that one outcome of her attempts to balance the various interests involved, was that the auto-shop men and their stewards tended to try to by-pass her - going straight to the officials or management. And the less enthusiasm she showed for their dispute, the more they attempted to do this. A struggle had been going on for some time, therefore, over her position as a mediator between the section's stewards and higher levels of negotiation. While she mediated this in relation to all groups, the men in the auto-shop harboured particular expectations of priority in relation to their demands - the previous convenor had been a tool-setter himself.

Because many aspects of the men's actions raised questions about control within the union's domestic organisation, this had constituted a major topic of discussion from the beginning of the dispute. An example of just such a conversation took place a few days after the stoppage, between the branch secretary, the convenor and the factory manager. The fact that the men had constantly been allowed to hold meetings amongst themselves, was seen by the branch secretary as the source of the problems - a control issue which the factory manager pointed out, both union and management shared.

Bert Long "Irene should conduct meetings upstairs, not  
(Factory Manager) the shop stewards."

Mary West  
(Branch Secretary) "Years ago, they never had any meetings upstairs -  
till Chris went up and started this.  
I could control them then."

Irene "I went to the canteen and told the men and  
(Convenor) everything I told them Roy contradicted me."

Bert "...I hear of meetings long after they've happened"

Irene "Denis (manager) tries to stop it..."

Bert "Only weapon we've got is to dock their time  
off - or lock the canteen door."

Irene "Then they'll be on to me to get it back, it's  
a vicious circle."

Bert "They won't use the vending machines either.  
That's another hobby-horse of mine. They  
go to the canteen to make tea....

I think we all have problems up there -  
branch and management. And I can't see  
any answer to it all. Common sense won't  
prevail."

Mary "Jim Mason (union's regional secretary) will  
have to come up and get them back into line."

Field notes 25.1.1977.

Looking at the question of control more broadly, it was clear that a major area of concern on the union side was the extent to which the men were going outside of the institution's formal and informal

structures. In the first place, they had not pursued their case through the grievance procedure; secondly, they had taken their case directly to ACAS and finally, they had failed to meet the officials for an informal meeting. That is, they had passed over the opportunity of going outside normal procedure when this had been officially offered. As the branch secretary observed: "It would do us a favour if the company was prepared to let them stew. It would show them they can't just throw out the procedure like that."

#### ACCESS TO THE BARGAINING TABLE : 'INSIDE/OUTSIDE' NEGOTIATIONS

As a means of enforcing the procedure and also of preventing the membership taking action in order to put pressure on themselves in negotiations, the union officials had generally adopted the policy of refusing to negotiate unless there was a return to normal working and the procedure had been followed correctly by the membership. Therefore, it might be considered surprising to find that on the 28th January the auto-shop dispute had been fitted onto the agenda of a Stage 5 conference with the company. Space had, indeed, been made to accommodate the item within the context of the official procedure, despite the fact that the men remained 'out of line'. Even if it was down for "informal discussion" on the agenda, to distinguish it from the other items which were properly for "negotiation", it was there and so were the shopstewards.

At this meeting, the regional official put the men's case regarding the loss of pay which led to the stoppage and the steward's claim that they had been prevented by the factory manager from pursuing their demand (for maintenance work to be done in overtime) through the official procedure - something they (now) wished to continue to do(2).



Having established the membership were back in procedure, it was interesting to note how the official and industrial relations director were content to remain outside it themselves - for the time-being:

Paul Silver            "I suggest an extraordinary meeting at Old  
(Union Official) Hill with the convenors and shopstewards....  
to discuss the position relating to the auto-  
shop: leading-hands' and setters' dispute on  
Friday; status quo and the way it operates;  
our accusations against management and payment  
for the women laid off." (my emphasis)

Tony Stuart           "I accept on condition this is not an accepted part  
(I.R. director) of procedure."

Field notes 28.1.1977.

And the shopstewards were given permission to hold yet another meeting in work's time (also 'out of procedure') in order to explain the position to the men.

The extraordinary meeting was conducted by the Industrial Relations director. The factory manager and auto-shop superintendent were present, along with the convenor and her deputy; Roy and Pat were there to represent male and female machine operatives respectively, who had lost earnings as a result of the auto-setters' action and the Friday stoppage. Chris put the case of the leading-hand setters - they were asking for more money for doing the 'fitting' aspect of their work. The basis of (one of) their complaint(s) against shopfloor management was that the latter had refused to allow the issue to be taken up through the stages of the procedure (presumably as a way of refusing to give it the status of being negotiable in the first place).

Once it had been established that, since the setters had done fitting jobs for the past seventeen years, they were not entitled to any extra pay under the social contract, they quickly came to the main points at issue.

Chris  
(Shopsteward  
auto-setters) "All around us we see companies finding ways  
to pay people for doing jobs they've done  
before or will continue to do....  
Are you prepared to look for ways of making  
payment for setters to do this job?"

Tony Stuart  
(Industrial  
Relations Dir.) (States position under social contract) "No,  
it's our policy and the trade union we negotiate  
with, not to condone the breaking of it."

Chris "Get the national officer here - we'll tell him.  
We can't get him."

Tony Stuart "It's your machinery. If you as a member  
want to get in touch with an official...."

Chris "Everyone is saying 'attack the social contract,  
it's destroying you'".

Tony Stuart "Make those comments to people who have influence.  
Industry was excluded from drawing up the social  
contract so you can save those words for other  
ears."

Field notes 2.2.1977.

The convenor then asked if the Industrial Relations director would  
be prepared to go to the Department of Employment with the union  
official. The director responded by making this conditional on the  
men returning to 'status quo.' When the stewards replied "That's one  
thing they won't do. That's their only weapon." The director attempted  
to re(locate) the whole issue totally within the "normal" procedural  
channels (which would have meant, in a sense, defeat for the men).

Tony Stuart "Well, it's got to go back to stage 5, stage  
6 and stage 7 - that's ACAS."

The convenor again offered the 'choice'

"The men won't revert to status quo. Therefore,  
it's the next stage (of procedure) or the  
Department of Employment."

Tony Stuart "I can't cut procedure short".

Irene "I've been advised by Paul Silver (the union  
official) to ask for this".

On receiving this information the director agreed to meet the official  
again at stage 5 to discuss the issue.

But when Roy then tried to present his case for the semi-skilled men's loss of earnings he was met with the procedure straight away.

"I suggest you start at Stage 1. You don't have access to me".

Before being refused payment in any case, since the loss was due to an industrial dispute (this being in line with the guaranteed pay agreement, agreed with the union(3)). What had been the outcome, then, of this series of negotiations with management? What had been gained and what had been conceded by the parties involved?

One of the basic demands of the auto-setters was abstract - that the principle behind their specific claims concerning the performance of certain job tasks on overtime-rates, should be accepted. That the company should, therefore, agree that they wanted to find more money for the men and thus, concede first that the claim itself be given negotiable status and second that negotiations would be progressed.

In effect, therefore, by agreeing to meet the union official at stage 5, the company-side had made concessions on both of these last two points. What the skilled grades had gained by their actions was thus access to the relevant level(s) of negotiation. And an important point was that they had had to go outside the "normal channels" in order to make this gain. But a condition of this concession - the quidpro-quo of the 'agreement to negotiate' - was that the whole group should proceed to operate within the institutional structures once more. (There was a suggestion too, although not so firmly insisted on at this point, that the return to normal working was a further condition of negotiation).

From the men's point of view there were costs attached to accepting even the first of these conditions. The male operators' claim for loss of earnings had been sent back down 'the snake' to square one of the procedure again. And, since it could not succeed while it was kept within the terms of the company-union agreements in any case, at some point something extra would, again, be required to force it to be taken outside the official structures (and the boundaries delineated by the agreements) for treatment as a special case.(4)

Overall, a large part of the bargaining activity in which management and auto-shop men had been engaged can be seen as being concerned with: establishing the negotiable status of the claim (as much as the substantial claim itself); gaining access to the appropriate bargaining levels, and sustaining its progress through them. This was so much the case that as it developed the whole dispute appeared to become almost entirely transmuted into one concerned with these issues.

#### INTERNAL BARGAINING : CRISIS IN REPRESENTATION

Six days after the extraordinary meeting between auto-shop stewards and top management, another special meeting - this time involving the whole body of shopstewards at Old Hill - had to be called by the union officials in order to sort out a breakdown of procedure and representation which appeared to have taken place as a consequence of the auto-shop workers' dispute. How and why had this breakdown occurred?

The meeting had been prompted specifically by a vote of no confidence in the convenor and deputy emanating from the auto-shop, which had been sent in to the branch office. The incident as a whole serves to illustrate first to what extent the procedure and system of representation had itself become a crucial focus of bargaining; and secondly, how far the collective bargaining activity of this group of workers extended beyond management, to encompass the union officials and, more

broadly, the rest of the workforce via their representatives as well. Before setting out the discussions which took place at the meeting itself, it may first be useful to expand on some of these points.

If it is true that all representatives have interests attached to them, then it is also the case that in a representative system, interests need representatives to carry them forward. In some areas of the workforce therefore, groups of workers had struggled to have their "own steward".

In the auto-shop the problem had become one of gaining priority amongst many competing interests, for their aims. Because the degree of priority accorded affected both the kind of access afforded to the bargaining channels available, and the degree of effective progress which could be made within them. (The comparison with skilled (trades) men below provides further illustration of this). But effectivity also depended on the levels at which representatives had access to negotiations with management and the procedure was important in respect of this.

The procedure provided access to the negotiating table which was, in theory, open to everyone. But because the most effective level of decision-making only really began at stage 5, the procedure served as much as a filter with built-in delays as it did a facility offering access. It thus constituted a focus of bargaining activity in itself. So also, did the various positions in the representative system. A convenor, for example, had better access to management and union officials than individual stewards, and, as has been noted elsewhere, the higher the level of procedure, the more control over negotiations passed

away from those with an immediate interest in their outcome. Extra urgency was added to the desire of this particular group to keep control over negotiations in their own hands because in contrast to the previous (male) convenor, who had accorded more automatic priority to the auto-shop's concerns, the present female incumbent appeared less inclined to do so.

It is maintained here that controlling the levels that issues progressed through was an important means of controlling the substantial aspects of negotiation - specifically, who bargained over what. To the extent that both the procedure and positions available in the representative structure were significant in this process, it is clear that they must themselves become negotiable. As also, must the very progress of an issue itself, given the perishability of most disputes. Parties to these negotiations, that is those with a particular interest in attempting to exercise varying degrees of control over bargaining content, include not only management, the negotiating union officials above individual factory/company level, and convenors (that is, those within it), but also interest groups among the workers themselves.

In the body of stewards as a whole is represented these numerous different interests - all competing for bargaining priority. Thus it can be seen that, when one group uses "muscle" against management, it is also a way of forcing the outcome in terms of this internal process of negotiation as well. That this could put a strain on the union's domestic organisation as a whole, is illustrated by subsequent events in the auto-shop dispute.

As we have already seen, the auto-shop workers had succeeded in their attempts to by-pass stages in procedure and also the convenor, and gain direct access to management and their officials by going 'outside' the formal system - (although at the cost of being redirected 'inside' it again). Now this section's representatives attempted to 'capture' the convenor's position for themselves. (5)

At the meeting which was chaired by Chris, the auto-setters' shop-steward (but run by the regional officer with the branch secretary in support) the vote of confidence was taken before discussion of the auto-shop was allowed to proceed. The convenor had a clear majority, her deputy, Jerry from the maintenance department, won it by a narrower margin of 15 votes to 9. The regional official then made an address in which he set out the informal discussion (at the stage 5 conference), the informal meeting subsequently arranged with management, and the proposed visit to the Department of Employment, as being the most the setters could possibly achieve. He went on to advise a return to normal working. When Roy announced that they wanted an official in to deal with the auto-shop's problems and asked if he was prepared to meet the stewards, the full-time officer took the opportunity to make a strong statement about the need to keep within the established structures of the procedure and the system of representation. He then went on to sharply admonish this steward who had been to ACAS for advice:

"I object to Roy going over my head...he is an official of this union and I object to him or anyone else going to ACAS and the Department of Employment.....No purpose is served by him getting the information from these departments. All the information he requires is in the hands of the convenor or branch secretary. If a member wishes

to go, well and good. But no elected representative should do it....Last week my secretary had Roy on the phone and I was in Uttoxeter. I told him to go to the branch secretary. I'm sure you'll agree it would be impossible to operate in this way....you must use your convenor."

Field notes 8.2.1977

On the matter of the auto-shop's complaints against the convenor, little was said by the stewards concerned at all (one being in the chair anyway) - beyond a few attempts to suggest that they might have been excluded from discussions with the factory manager and that they wanted greater involvement for stewards in the factory generally.

But there was no discussion of this beyond the convenor's reply:

"At official stage 4's, I've never refused to let shopstewards involved in particular departments in. But you come down in a group and go straight to the factory manager. And that's not the procedure."

Pushed back into procedure, the male auto-shop stewards had attempted to progress their claims through the 'normal' channels by capturing the convenor's position, which would give them the necessary access to higher levels of negotiation. But they had failed to find support from the other shopstewards and found themselves even more firmly positioned in terms of the formal procedure than before. They then moved to change the procedure and structure of representation itself, in order to make it more responsive to their particular demands. First by arguing for a higher status designation for their own representatives, and secondly, by asking for an additional stage to be inserted in the procedure which would give their representatives direct access to top factory management.



Thus, we find that in the latter half of the meeting the focus of the discussion swung round to the status of the steward, Vin Brown (who was also present). Vin represented a group of skilled men - some 23 toolmakers working in a small outlying workshop called Portersfield, which was some way from the main factory; but, because they came under the Old Hill management, their representative had always been included in that factory's domestic organisation.

Vin was also a regular attender on the branch committee and it was through this body that the branch secretary had argued for him to be given the title of 'convenor'. This had occurred in the second week of January, after the toolroom workers had begun to show increasing signs of impatience and disaffection with the union over the lack of progress on their long-standing demand for staggered holidays. The branch secretary's proposal, which she put to the committee was, in fact, a 'consolation' concession of increased representational status for these men, in the hope that this might head-off their possibly impending action. The case for his increased status had been argued by the branch secretary on 'technical' grounds - that Portersfield was a separate factory etc. And, although at the time the rest of the committee acquiesced with little discussion, at two subsequent branch committee meetings attempts had been made by shopstewards to reconsider the question. But the officials were able to insist that their original decision must stand.

Now, four weeks after this decision had first been put through the committee, the men in the auto-shop were asking for their 'own' convenor. The central question of (privileged) access this position provided had been posed particularly sharply for them at the stage 5

conference (discussed above), where their actions had forced a space on the agenda for their demands and a physical entry 'to the bargaining table' for themselves. But Vin Brown had been there as well, having gained accession through an entirely different route - one, moreover, that had been 'sponsored' by the officials. However this had been achieved, it was certainly not forthcoming for the auto-shop as the officers proceeded to point out. Against demands for separate representation and (improved) access, the latter went on to argue:

"Any section could say that: we had this at Scourbridge  
- a shopsteward felt no-one could represent  
his members on nights but...  
My personal view is that too many come in on stage 5  
now... "

As might, by now be apparent, a number of issues concerned with representation were being negotiated throughout this meeting, not only between the auto-shop representatives and the officials, but between the officials and the whole body of shopstewards, and also, to some extent, between the auto-shop representatives and the rest of the shopstewards.

The final item, therefore, to complete what can be seen as a series of negotiations around the same topic, was Roy's request for another stage to be inserted into the procedure between four (at factory level) and five (all factories) - presumably as an alternative means of giving 'section stewards' an entry to negotiations involving the officials and top level management. This, the official replied, would mean a change in the "blue book." An answer which seemed to convey sufficient finality to end the discussion.

What progress, meanwhile, was being made on the substantive items constituting the actual claim itself? Keeping his side of the bargain, the union officials and the industrial relations director

subsequently visited the Department of Employment in London for 'a ruling' on the men's specific demands. Predictably, the reply, set out in a letter passed on by management, was that the setters' claim could not be considered under the terms of the social contract. But not only was the substantial demand turned down, or lost, in this manner, so too was the claim's negotiable status and also the bargaining entry that the men had previously won. In order not to leave the negotiating table completely empty-handed, the auto-shop stewards had in the last resort asked management for a letter to be sent to their members from the company, stating that they would, at least, be prepared to negotiate "when circumstances permitted". But their answer, this time, came straight back in an official letter from the TUC, passed on by the branch secretary, stating that....

"The advice which the TUC has consistently given negotiators is that they should avoid making specific commitments for the implementation of improvements on dates after July 31 1977."

The men had lost all of their demands for more pay and the company then began to threaten that they would begin to make lay-offs unless they resumed "normal working".

On the 18th March the "bonus" strike began. The men in the auto-shop continued working although their representatives attended the joint shopstewards meeting addressed by the union's regional secretary (the official being on holiday). The main topics pursued by the auto-shop stewards concerned the social contract: finding loopholes, and legitimate ways around it, getting rid of it or forcing the company to break it. But at the end of these discussions, organising a return to work was a problem - what could be offered in order to achieve this? What was offered, on condition the strike was ended, was merely another trip to

the Department of Employment by the union official and the industrial relations director with a further list of demands for "vetting". As the regional secretary's notes neatly expressed it: "Can't have bonus under social contract. Let the Department of Employment do the stopping."

By the second week of April the auto-shop workers' formal request for extra overtime had been taken through the procedure and arrived at stage 5. Accordingly, the claim was negotiated at a proper conference with appropriate arguments being put by the regional official and industrial relations director respectively. But, using the "correct channels" was clearly no guarantee of success because the latter refused to make a special case for this group of men. "There are 9000 other employees who could ask for the same."

When the union's own procedure for properly responding to a failure-to-agree at the final stage was invoked subsequently - it was also in vain. The union official brought the reply of the regional executive on the question of the men taking industrial action in support of their claim. The committee recommended an immediate return to normal working and were "not prepared to recommend for any disruption."

The men in the auto-shop had again failed in their negotiations with both the union and management, to secure support for any kind of sectional gain. Perhaps as a consequence of this, they increasingly directed their energies into a more generalised demand - to prevent the company from restricting their wage increase to within stage 2 guidelines. In their growing resolve to effect this (as other avenues of improving their position were closed) they found wider support - particularly from other groups of male workers who were seriously discussing this question.

Meanwhile, negotiations within the union side on the question of representation were maintained. In May, at a meeting of the branch committee called to discuss policy on this wage claim, the question of Vin Brown's status as 'convenor' for Portersfield was raised once more. This time it was by Pat, the shopsteward for women in the auto-shop (as the only representative from this department on the branch committee).

"There's going to be a lot of controversy: if Portersfield can have their own, the auto-shop want theirs."

She argued that, since Portersfield came under Old Hill's management and was still incorporated into that factory's domestic organisation, "You've got two convenors under the same management, and that's never been known". The officials argued that the "extra" representation was necessary because Portersfield was a separate factory and there was little communication between the two. "We wanted someone from there who could deal with stage 4's - not someone they didn't know at all." They also argued that although only a small group (only 23) the skilled men's representative had always been treated as a "senior steward", that "he was doing nothing different now and that only his title had changed". And (revealingly) the branch secretary added: "The lads there don't want anyone else getting involved".

Later on the same day at a meeting of the joint shopstewards, again called to discuss the wage claim, the issue of Vin was brought up by Chris the auto-setters' shopsteward, who raised the question as soon as the proceedings were opened. His general argument was that, since there was no committee of shopstewards to elect him, Vin Brown could not be a "convenor", and as such - who was he answerable to?

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Chris's specific objection however centered around the fact that Vin had recently examined sections of the ratebook referring to the auto-shop in order to establish a claim for his own members. Finally, Chris voiced objection to the way the position had been established in the first place:

"There's no way Vin Brown can be a convenor under the rule-book. It's been done through the back-door, or rather the front door - in front of the branch committee."

The Chairman intervened:

"Will you be satisfied if it's decided here and now - if we vote in favour of Vin being made a senior steward and not a convenor?"

Chris: "Let's not hoodwink each other. He's on all the meetings and stages (of negotiation through procedure). There's nothing that says senior stewards can go to all meetings."

The officials pointed out to those present that a vote in favour of "demoting" Vin was a vote to diminish representation for a group of workers and reduce their "rights". This went against their previous "custom and practice" of increasing the representation of the skilled men especially - for example, by special co-option of their representatives onto wage negotiating teams, as had always been done in the past. The meeting voted 36-25 in favour of confirming Vin as a "senior steward". But with what effect, it was not clear.

The struggle over representation also continued within the Old Hill factory's domestic organisation. When Jerry, the deputy convenor was voted out as shopsteward for the maintenance section, the convenor, Irene's, attempts to retain him as her assistant by finding him a position representing female supervision was stopped by specific objections from the auto-shop. These led to the branch secretary

writing to the company to indicate that such an arrangement was not acceptable. As a result of an election held subsequently Pat, the female steward from the auto-shop, was elected as deputy convenor in his place.

Even so, members and shopstewards in this section still found themselves having to negotiate access for their grievances, not only through but with, the convenor and also the branch secretary.

Irene "The auto-shop men are asking for a clarification  
(Convenor) of the wage sheets today. They came....I  
refused to see them all, it was a deputation.  
So Bert Long (factory manager) sent them all  
off again."

In due course, however, this issue must have been dealt with, in the sense of being taken up through the procedure, since eventually it was registered by the convenor for negotiation at stage 5. When, a week later, Chris asked the branch secretary to take up another stage 5 reference involving the promotion of a machine shop charge-hand - he got rather less response, as the officer herself explained:

"I know that discretionary awards are not allowed under the pay policy - we've been to London often enough....I just said no, he couldn't have it."

And, even when the request for this reference was put in to the branch office to be formally registered at stage 5 in any case - it still did not go onto the agenda. Sorting through the items listed, the negotiating officer decided that he wanted more discussion with the steward first.

"And Chris has asked for a branch committee meeting and a meeting of the joint shopstewards to discuss the wage claim....Paul says they're not to have it - they've already had one and they're not due for another 2 weeks - he's not prepared to attend so they can't have it. I'll not be dictated to - I said to JM (regional secretary) yesterday - I'll not have them questioning my authority any more - they can't go demanding this and that..." (branch secretary) 25.5.77/349



The men kept up a continuous pressure on the union machinery to force some responsiveness towards their demands, as a result of which the officials' control over this became increasingly explicit. In the main the men had failed to exert sufficient control over the bargaining process to make sectional gains. But the movement against the acceptance of stage 2, in which the auto-shop had been particularly prominent, was finally successful (see Chapter 13 above). And at the end of that year, Russell, a 'new' stopsteward in this department was elected the factory's convenor, with a woman from the sub-assembly area as his deputy. So this group of men did eventually succeed in their struggle for increased representation in relation to other groups as well.

In the next case study we look at a group of male workers who were successful in advancing a sectional claim i.e. in making the machinery 'work' especially for them. We look at what was involved in terms of the system of representation, finding that the most notable feature was separation within the bargaining structures which the men's position in the labour process facilitated.

#### The toolroom men's dispute

"Members have asked if it might be possible for some of the male employees to be allowed to have staggered holidays. Mr. Silver said this would be discussed informally with Mr. Ferguson."  
Minutes:branch meeting 17.10.1972

This case study concerns a demand for staggered holidays in the toolrooms. At a certain point this dispute coincided with that of another skilled group - in the maintenance department. What emerged was a joint demand for special treatment which finally materialised in the form of the "Craftsmen's Agreement" negotiated with the company

in 1978. Our aim, in this section, is to examine and compare some of the processes already identified in relation to the auto-shop male workers' demands which were being taken up at the same time. There are some interesting contrasts to be found in the differing fortunes of these two groups of male workers. It is hoped that analysis of these may help to throw some light, in turn, on the position of the women workers in the bargaining process.

It was immediately apparent that the skilled men at BSR tended to gain the attention of both management and union officials more readily than other groups of workers. While some aspects of this remain to be examined, there were a number of background features which also appear to be relevant. For example, the initial impetus behind the union recognition struggle at East Kilbride had come from the skilled 'tradesmen' who were members of the AUEW.

The company therefore remained wary of this group of relatively expensive and scarce workers whose counterparts in the West Midlands motor industry also retained a reputation for strong, sectional organisation and militancy. The agreement conceding sole negotiating rights to the GMWU for all BSR's factories in the West Midlands (the AUEW was recognised in Scotland) closed the door on the "enfranchisement" of those skilled men who retained their membership of the various craft unions appropriate to their trade; at least, until they finally agreed to join the GMWU as well. But, after their experience with Pilkingtons, this union also had reason to beware of any group sufficiently disaffected to threaten an organised split from the ranks. If nothing else, therefore, these toolroom workers - who constituted the largest section of skilled tradesmen at BSR - tended to find in both management and union officials a more ready audience for their grievances.

At the time of the study (1977-8) BSR employed around 70 toolmakers/repairers. Just under half of these worked in the Portersfield toolroom, a factory which was separate from the 4 main production sites. Slightly more were employed in a toolroom attached to the Stourbridge factory, and about a dozen toolmakers were distributed across the other 3 plants, where they were mainly engaged in on-site repairs.

Like other skilled groups the toolmakers at BSR were looking to improve their pay and conditions both relatively and absolutely. Staggered holidays had been an early demand (as the branch minutes of October 1972 quoted above, show). The company operated a policy of fixed holidays for all workers; different arrangements to accommodate the appropriate number of days, being discussed and voted on in advance, for each year. The policy was strictly operated for all employees including management (if only because there were inadequate personnel resources to allow flexibility) and no exceptions were permitted. Of course, some workers, such as maintenance and a few toolmakers, were, of necessity, engaged in work which could only be carried out during shut-down periods; as a result fewer of their holiday-days were 'tied' (6).

It appeared to the rest of the toolroom (and other indirect workers including the office staff) that there was more scope for flexibility regarding their holidays than the company would concede. This particular issue became bound up with the skilled tradesmen's desire to improve their conditions and have the company give expression to their special status in relation to other groups of workers - particularly the "BSR-skilled" - such as the setters and inspectors. Impetus behind the demand built up rapidly once a general compression of differentials

was perceived (realistically or not) to be occurring as a consequence of incomes policies. And, to the extent that the issue encapsulated a demand for better treatment, it was spurred on by an awareness too that the numbers of toolmakers employed had been falling (for example, from 32 to 23 at Portersfield over the past 18 months), although the workload had not, and more tools were being bought-in from outside the company.

The request for staggered holidays for toolroom workers had been put into the formal procedure once the informal discussions (presumably held at the end of 1972) had proved fruitless. Negotiation on the issue, between top management and union officials, began in September 1976 and was still continuing into the New Year. It was probably to stave off increasing frustration at the lack of progress on this and other of this group's demands at this particular time that Vin Brown was given the status of 'convenor' at Portersfield (where he was the sole shopsteward). And the same month (January 1977) a meeting was held at stage 6 of the procedure for a final decision on staggered holidays from the company chairman.

Present at this conference were the two full-time officers, the four female convenors, with their four male deputies (one of whom was also a toolmaker) plus Vin from the Portersfield toolroom and Keith from the toolroom at Stourbridge. Negotiations took place on a number of different levels, that is, not only between the official and the company chairman, but also between the officials and the skilled men and between the skilled men and those representing the other sections of the workforce.

The official presented the men's case in the context of pay policy restrictions and the need to give "extra incentives" to the skilled men. He recalled occasions when the company had been prepared to give special treatment to this group of workers in the past. However, the chairman refused their request on the grounds that this would "open the floodgates" and thus "impair efficiency". In short, he felt he could not afford to set this precedent. Calling for a recess, the union official pointed out to the skilled men present that the procedure had now been exhausted (bar resort to ACAS, which neither he, nor the chairman wanted). What further course of action did the men envisage? The toolrooms' representatives outlined a proposed strategy of blacking all tools made since September (when negotiations on the issue began). On behalf of other workers represented at the meeting, however, it was pointed out that, while this would not affect the pay packets of the toolmakers, it would certainly affect the pay of operatives - when machines started to go down. "You're putting pressures on other people to make the company change their minds". There was, moreover, a danger that industrial action could escalate if management decided to lay off a toolmaker for refusing to do a job. The official then pointed out the complex (and time-consuming) process of having a strike made official and the unlikelihood that one involving some 10,000 workers would be. Faced with deadlock and now under pressure to offer something himself, "I've always tried to get special consideration for skilled men, I feel they are under-valued," the official then proposed they should ask for a pilot scheme to run for one or two years. But the union-side had to "offer" something in return for this. Certainly,

the men would guarantee cover during holidays when required (management had sometimes found problems here) and the company could avert industrial action and also have an opportunity to assess whether or not the scheme impaired efficiency. (7) But the main "problem" of restricting the scope of any special arrangement to this group alone still remained and something had to be "offered" on this one.

Paul Silver (official) "Can we guarantee that it won't be extended to other groups?"

Mary West (branch secretary): "We could - we could just refuse to take any more (demands) up."

Paul "We would have to take it to branch to back up our assurance. The branch will have to agree to the pilot scheme."

Keith (toolmaker, Stourbridge) "It would be thrown out."

Paul "I disagree. If he (the company chairman) agrees - he won't accept my word that it would not set a precedent. I'd have to take it to the branch committee. And we would recommend they (the branch) did accept it on the grounds that we don't want to impair the efficiency of the factory."

When the proposal was put to the company chairman it was clear that he feared pressure from office workers for flexible holidays would be much increased by any concessions to the skilled men. And the former were not covered by assurances to limit the scope of the agreement from this branch, since they were in Matsa, a separate section with their own branch and full-time negotiating officer. It was left that the company would write to the union with their answer. If they refused, then a "retrospective failure to agree" would be registered.

If they agreed, then the branch committee would recommend that the branch accepted limited scope for the agreement. There was no problem envisaged about the branch committee doing this. Those present at the negotiation, including the three toolroom workers, constituted the bulk of it and the two negotiating officials were also always in attendance. (8)

When the Chairman's subsequent refusal was communicated to the tool-room workers at Stourbridge, they began their blacking straight away. The officials took the letter to Portersfield and outlined the possible alternatives remaining. The men could apply for permission to take strike action through the 'proper channels' of the union; do nothing; or go to ACAS. By pointing out straightaway that the first and last courses of action would be fruitless, the officials were indicating that the issue would now have to be processed outside the formal channels. Going on to make an explicit statement to this effect, the officials gave what was tantamount to permission and also support for this.

"There's got to be some way of paying for skill. The skilled toolmakers have made an important contribution....but I don't think it's any use going to the union to escalate it. You've got to decide whether to resolve it between the toolroom and the company or drop it."

Paul Silver

Permission for separate and informal pursuance of the dispute would also imply the officials' acceptance of the men's proposed sanctions. Indeed, the officials indicated their willingness to go along with this. But they also pointed out various other possibilities now opened up to the men once the formal channels had been dispensed with. Direct access was one:

"I think you should make your disgust clear to Ferguson. You must ask him what his intentions are for the skilled men - when he can do something. You work in a factory where you are dominated by females. He should be coming down here and saying what he's prepared to do for you. The skilled man has been undervalued for too long...You'll have to go to him with your demands."

Mary West (branch secretary)

In the second place, the negotiating official indicated that the men should continue to look for meetings with the company at the top level. He was prepared to be involved (i.e. to ignore the fact that a failure

to agree had already been established at stage 6).

A major part of the discussion between the men themselves (as averse to the previous discussions which had taken place with the officials) concerned support for the blacking. There were two questions to be faced: the need for support within their own ranks and the necessity for them to show solidarity with Stourbridge. With half a dozen ~~absent~~ <sup>attendances</sup>, the vote went in favour of taking action. And their steward reminded them: "That means if one goes out we're all out. We've had this before..." Later on the same day, the officials met the toolroom workers at Stourbridge, this time in the presence of Ellen the convenor. The question of the possible impact of the blacking on the women production workers was soon raised.

Floor (male toolroom worker):

"I suggest we keep the ban on."

Paul Silver  
(official)

"I don't disagree with your ban, but it's unfair if it hurts someone else."

Ellen (convenor)

"Well you've got to hurt yourself as well."

Floor:

"When they want something, do they consider us....when they vote on the wages?"

Ellen

"If you put a ban on tools, some out there will be sent home. You may want their help sometime."

In relation to the issue of staggered holidays itself, the position of the women was also discussed. In effect, the men felt the women workers already had staggered holidays - because many took the time off (ignoring the fact that this was unpaid and at the risk of disciplinary action) to have holidays with their husbands. The vote to continue the blacking was carried overwhelmingly.



In the second week of February the officials met the company Chairman and Industrial Relations director one evening for a long "informal" discussion covering a number of currently outstanding issues. Since Ferguson still could not see his way to conceding to the toolroom workers' demands, discussion ranged over management's responses to the toolmakers blacking and also their attitude to the skilled men in general.

"The skilled men, all they want is attention. You need to show your appreciation. You've got to see them as being something different - where are you going to get them from when you need them? They are over-ruled the whole time by women - the semi-skilled - if I were a skilled man....Maybe eventually you can close the toolroom, but at the moment you couldn't operate without them."

Branch secretary (reported conversation)

While the dispute was not resolved at this meeting, in principle, it was agreed that more would need to be done for the skilled men.

Shortly after this the maintenance men took action over an attempt by management to cut overtime and reduce manning. The two groups (maintenance and toolroom) eventually came together in pursuance of a general claim for improved conditions and differentials which management and union were already - as we have seen - predisposed to accept. Agreement on staggered holidays for toolroom workers was finally reached at the end of April - to run for a trial period of two years.

#### COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND SECTIONAL GAINS

There is an argument by which it is proposed that stronger groups making sectional gains, open up the way for those in a weaker bargaining position to make gains they might not otherwise have had. Our examination of the bargaining process however also suggests that sectional

gains reflecting and resulting from unequal bargaining resources may also have an opposite effect - in terms of their impact both on bargaining and representational structures and on the position of other workers in the labour process. We can see this when we compare the positions of the auto-shop and toolroom workers.

On the same day that the officials met the toolroom workers and proposed they move outside the formal channels of negotiation, the shop-stewards committee meeting, which had been called as a result of the auto-shop workers dispute, had been held at the Old Hill factory. As we have seen, the main concern of the officials at this meeting had been to force the auto-shop workers (through their representatives) 'back into line' and they had adopted a fairly attacking and aggressive stance towards activity they defined as falling outside the formal channels. (9)

Apart from the contrast in tone and approach to these two disputes which had been running concurrently throughout January - it is clear that the auto-shop men had had to do far more in order to gain initial access to effective levels of negotiation than the toolroom workers. The former had had to use the strategy of going outside the formal channels (breaking procedure and stopping work) in order to get their demands onto the bargaining table in the first place. And they clearly needed to put explicit pressure on their own negotiators as much as on management in order to progress their demands. Indeed, this point of contrast had not been lost on the auto-shop's representatives. It was expressed in the demand for their own convenor and their attack on the status of Vin Brown. Why did one group of the membership face greater difficulties than the other?

In the first place certainly it was clear that both management and the officials were pre-disposed towards being more sympathetic to the skilled "tradesmen," (10) (as averse to the "BSR-skilled"). Both shared the attitude that these workers deserved "better treatment" - not only in terms of what they were getting at present but also in relation to other workers. While this more sympathetic attitude would, undoubtedly, have helped the 'tradesmen', there were other significant differences in the position of these two groups of male workers both inside and outside the labour process which need to be considered. Outside, the 'tradesmen's' qualifications and their exercise of (some degree of) control over access to jobs meant the company was, for the time-being anyway, more dependent on them than management would perhaps have liked.

But another reason why the employers seemed more ready in general to make concessions to this group of workers rather than the other including the concession to negotiate in the first instance, was because the costs (gains from the workers' point of view) could be much more easily contained. (The importance of this factor is not diminished by the fact that, as we have seen, the demand for staggered holidays was initially refused, since it was mainly on this count.) What does this process of limitation entail?

It would seem that 'containment' depends upon the degree of separation of any group concerned at a number of different levels. And, as we shall see, management, union officials and the men had an interest in controlling this. But the extent to which this control could be achieved varied between the two groups.

Some degree of separation for the toolmakers derived from their position in the labour process. Whereas the auto-shop workers were linked directly into production, producing machined parts for assembly (with few stocks) and paid on piece-rates; the former were indirect workers, paid on time-rates.

From management's point of view separation and differentiation may be useful to the extent that it limits the degree to which concessions on particular issues made to one group may be applicable to others. The auto-shop workers' demands for more pay and overtime could scarcely be confined in these terms, and as it happened, there appeared, at the time, to be insufficient separation and differentiation to narrow the applicability of the toolmakers' demands for staggered holidays either. (11)

Another implication arising from the different positions of these two groups in the labour process concerned the degree of control which each could exercise over the scope of any sanctions they applied. Although the other side of this was the readiness (or otherwise) of management to minimise the impact on other workers, the auto-shop, being directly linked into the production chain, was probably less well placed than the toolroom to control the extent of any impact from their actions themselves.

Management's ability to utilise divisions in the workforce to limit the scope of concessions is, to an important extent, hindered by unionisation. Sectional gains and unequal bargaining are contradicted by membership-in-common, broad-based constituencies and 'cross-representation', a democratic ideology and formal equality within each trade union organisation. And certainly, in this case, separation of

the bargaining structures was less complete than it might have been if different groups of workers had belonged to different unions. So how could sectional and unequal gains be achieved/maintained within one, supposedly common, bargaining structure? And with what effect?

We find that in order to 'manage' these contradictions, the union officials had to resort to manipulation of the representational and bargaining structures at every level - a process requiring on their part, the maintenance of a high degree of control over these. In order to concede the limitation (or containment) of staggered holidays to toolroom workers only, for example, the full-time officers needed to be able to ensure branch agreement to this - facilitated by their control over the branch committee.

The logic of sectional bargaining was fragmentation and separation in the system of representation on the shopfloor paralleling the interest divisions and bargaining strength of work groups or particular sectional categories. The biggest divisions along these lines ran between the women and the men - who each had 'their own representatives', resulting as we have noted, in a high degree of inequality proportionally between the two groups in the structure. But as we have also seen in these case studies, there were also divisions between the men. And again, where these were not reflected in separate representation - the separation had to be effected by some other means. The position of the 6 toolmakers stationed in the Old Hill factory illustrates this point nicely.

Too small a group to have their own steward, they had been added to the constituency of auto-setters and inspectors (skilled grades) in the auto-shop - they were therefore represented by Chris. Since it was precisely this category of "BSR-skilled" that the toolroom workers

at Portersfield and Stourbridge had especially wished to better themselves in relation to, they showed the same degree of enthusiasm about Chris's involvement in their deliberations as he had shown for theirs.

Since there was no convenient separation here in terms of the representation of the two groups, the solution was to exclude Chris in order to achieve it. That this was warranted on the grounds of containment, even at the expense of the Old Hill toolmen's representation, was made clear:

Irene (convenor, Old Hill): "Our toolroom have not been notified. They have no idea what's going on with the holiday dispute."

Mary West (branch secretary): "Those up there should be included."

Irene "Chris is going to demand to be there as their rep."

Mary "Well he won't be able to...And it won't include the auto-shop - only the toolroom. They'll have to go it alone."

(Ref 18.5/326)

Reference to 'going it alone' was most often used to indicate when a section of workers were "legitimately" to use alternative channels of negotiation to the main ones provided and this is another aspect of the separation of bargaining structures. One of the chief ways that sectional bargaining was managed by the union officials (and also the strong groups of workers themselves) was to construct an area of bargaining activity outside the 'normal' channels of negotiation and the union's formal organisation structure. As a consequence these bargaining activities and the substantive issues pursued within them tended to have a very low "public" profile indeed. And we find that,

while retaining a significant presence on all the union committees, groups of skilled 'tradesmen' did not need to use these structures to discuss or further their own interests. The contrast between the two groups of male workers, as well as that between males and females, in this respect is clearly illustrated in the branch minutes. (See pp 466-70 above). Here we can see that the sole occasion recorded in this period that an issue affecting toolmakers was raised in this public forum was staggered holidays - back in October 1972. Thereafter, there is not a single mention, in either the branch or branch committee minutes, of this or any other demand emanating specifically from this group. (12)

What were the further consequences of creating such alternative official/unofficial bargaining channels? To the extent that these constituted a further bargaining resource available to some groups more readily than others, they magnified inequalities in bargaining strength in relation to management. But they also had an impact on internal bargaining relationships as well, as we have seen when comparing the toolroom workers with the men in the auto-shop. The former had been given a means of by-passing negotiations with other groups of workers for bargaining priority or access, while the latter had been forced to do so, and thus prevented from possibly making gains at other workers' expense.

Nor did the toolroom workers have to utilise 'outside' or 'unofficial' channels of negotiation with management in order to 'by-pass' these internal negotiations, since having their 'own' convenor provided this group with an alternative entirely within the 'formal' system. This was certainly true of the toolroom at Stourbridge, for whom Vin was as much their representative at the higher levels of negotiation as Ellen was.

As we have seen, the auto-shop stewards had taken up the issue of unequal representation in relation to the status of Vin and themselves, not only because they desired the same advantages (such as access to higher negotiating levels with management which were not mediated by a convenor who would balance their interests against others) but also because they felt disadvantaged by the toolroom workers' superior bargaining position in relation to themselves. To the extent that this was the case, presumably other groups were similarly, so disadvantaged. We therefore need to enquire in what ways this might have been.

The men in the toolrooms could continue to progress negotiations on their demands with management through alternative bargaining channels made available on an informal and a formal basis, without being required to subject these to the scrutiny of other workers. But to the extent that they remained integrated within the factory's domestic structures as well, they were party to the internal negotiations other groups had to take part in - i.e other workers still had to bargain with them for priority/support in relation to their demands, and there was no need for the toolroom men to operate the reciprocity they were in a position to demand.

In May the auto-shop stewards had again tried to get Vin banned from attending the Old Hill factory's shopsteward meetings. They also attempted to stop him (through representations to the branch committee) from being invited to the (newly instituted) convenors' meetings "unless discussions are about Portersfield." The branch secretary defended his presence there:



"He has to know what's going on. And, if you don't want him at Old Hill, then say so - and he can go to another factory....Waterfall Lane and Stourbridge would certainly allow him to sit on their committee."

(Branch secretary 326/18.5 and 353/26.5)

The issue which had sparked off the autoshop stewards complaints about Vin's participation in the factory forum specifically concerned the access to and use of information in the context of the two groups' sectional claims (and gains). While the autoshop's specific demands had been blocked (and they had been forced to spearhead a general demand regarding the next wage claim), the toolroom workers had done better for themselves. And by May they had achieved an 'in principle' agreement for future special consideration from the company and agreement had also been reached on the issue of staggered holidays.

Even so, at the Portersfield factory particularly, the men were still looking for alternative ways to get improvements in their pay. Especially since they had, by now, discovered that seven of their number were being paid on the lowest rate for this category of workers in the rate-book, while none of the toolmakers at Stourbridge were. Vin was, accordingly, preparing to make a claim for re-grading. Since there was a "rule" that each category of worker could only have access (through their representatives) to the page of the rate-book pertaining to themselves, Vin had had to go to the autoshop to ask for a view of theirs. When he was refused, he went to the branch office, and from there (or elsewhere?) he had obtained a copy of the autoshop pay-rates which he pinned up in the Portersfield toolroom. It was when this was spotted by a visiting maintenance worker from Old Hill, who carried the news back to the autoshop, that the trouble began again.

The autoshop workers complained about intrusion into their privacy, and the reasons why this should be feared were not difficult to find. The skilled and semi-skilled males in the autoshop were on relatively higher rates than their equivalents elsewhere, and their earnings were on a par with (some claimed they were higher than) many of the toolroom workers. This was partly because the former worked shifts, but it was also due to the fact that, over the years the autoshop males who were on piece-work, had managed via "domestic agreements", to achieve a number of special bonuses. These, in conjunction with various 'consolidations' along the way, put them on higher rates of pay.

"And so, you see, they are frightened, that since these have been brought to light and general attention drawn to them, that while they won't lose them - these couldn't exactly be taken off them - it will be that much harder in the future to get such concessions."

(Ref 18.5/327)

Paul Silver (Regional Official)

Thus we can see that a further feature deriving from pressures to contain the scope of bargaining concerned the ability of all parties involved to control (the spread of) information. This ability again might be partly determined by the positions of different groups in the labour process and their degree of 'connectedness'. However, it also derived from the way that interest groups were related to each other through the system of representation and the bargaining structures.

And it is clear that control over information engendered as a consequence of unequal or sectional bargaining had, like the other aspects identified in these case studies, wider implications for the union's domestic organisation. Viewed broadly, the main consequence of this phenomenon of 'protecting' sectional gains by secrecy was to significantly reduce the total amount of information available and circulating through the domestic organisation as a whole. And, since

access to and control over information can be seen as an important bargaining resource, there was a reduction in this from the point of view of the workforce, if not for management or the union officials.

The toolroom workers' demands for improved pay and conditions eventually became conjoined with those of the maintenance men, resulting, as we have seen, in the 'Craftsmen's agreement'. In this final case study, examining aspects of the bargaining process in relation to groups of male workers, we look at the maintenance men's dispute. This raises three particular issues: the question of representation, again the focus of 'internal' bargaining activity; the problems of control arising from the use of 'outside' bargaining channels and finally, the process of negotiating the distribution of 'costs' of workers' disputes.

The maintenance men's dispute

Sixteen fitters were employed in the large moulding shop at Stourbridge to do machine maintenance and setting. They worked two eight-hour shifts alternately and shared the opportunity of overtime on a Saturday morning. This had first been instituted when, for a period in the past, production had taken place on Saturday morning, requiring four men - two for setting and two for oiling and greasing. Even though, for the female operatives, Saturday morning production had long since ceased, the men had maintained these overtime hours. That is, until November, when, as we have already noted (in respect of the auto-shop), the company Chairman had ordered a cut in overtime. The factory manager at Stourbridge had agreed that two of the fitters could continue to do the oiling and greasing on a Saturday morning. The men were not happy with this, but as demand slackened and more of the machines lay idle, management went on to intimate that they wished to reduce manning

on the section altogether. When this idea was firmly resisted, the men were told that all oiling and greasing was to be done during their "normal" 40 hour week as "they now had plenty of time to do it".

On the day after the Branch meeting at the end of February, at which the negotiating official had given a report on the autoshop dispute and its outcome (the Department of Employment had refused to allow more pay for maintenance duties which auto-setters claimed were 'extra'), the moulding shop fitters took action. They refused to oil and grease any machinery in "normal" time and demanded the reinstatement of overtime for doing this work.

"We took our overtime problem to the convenor, but she said there was nothing they could do on it, the union couldn't fight on overtime - so we decided to go ahead unofficially"  
Terry (maintenance) (14)

The plastic moulding machines leaked a lot of oil and a week later (March 4th) the one producing control arms went down. This threatened to halt the main assembly lines within a very short time, and at an emergency meeting with the factory manager, a failure to agree at stage 4 was registered and a stage 5 conference was hastily arranged. In return for this the men agreed to continue oiling and greasing "until the procedure at stage 5 has been exhausted."

It was in the week following that Terry called a meeting for the skilled men i.e. maintenance and toolroom together, at Stourbridge. (Prior to this, the toolroom and maintenance had been meeting separately). But, fearing the latter were "jumping the gun", the toolroom workers refused to attend. The stage 5 conference had been arranged for March 16th, however, and with both disputes on the agenda, it is probable that they did finally meet together sometime before this.

At this time, the toolmakers' action over staggered holidays had begun to take on an entrenched look. Additionally, workers in the Portersfield toolroom had been pushing a demand for staff status through the procedure as a possible alternative route to improving their conditions under pay policy. The issue had made rapid progress through the various stages and was registered at stage 5 by Vin in the last week of February. However the stage 5 conference had been instigated by the maintenance men's dispute, and the inclusion of the toolmakers' 'staff status' demand was something of a token gesture. This was because neither the officials nor management had any enthusiasm to pursue it and, although Vin had registered a stage 5 on the issue on February 21st, no date for a meeting had been set. As a consequence of this by the second week of March Vin had had to face a vote of no confidence from his members because the officials had still not dealt with their request.

Although the meeting was a stage 5 conference, it did not include, as was customary, convenors and deputies from all of the factories. Apart from officials and management, only Ellen convenor and Terry, maintenance chargehand and shopsteward from Stourbridge, were present, along with Vin from Portersfield.

Three topics were negotiated at this meeting with management: the maintenance men's dispute, the toolroom workers' claim for staff status and the placing of a special agreement for the skilled men onto the bargaining agenda.

On the first matter, management returned with an offer of Saturday overtime for two men for 6 weeks in return for discussions taking place within this period on moving four of the setters off the section. Debate on this last point was particularly interesting, because only the manager and the branch secretary maintained a position consistent with that normally applied with regard to the women workers.

Paul Silver (union official): "I will not discuss a reduction of manning in the moulding department."

Tony Stuart: (Industrial Relations director) "I can see you won't. But I can see the men might. You'll be the first to criticise us for inefficient management - and it would be inefficient to over-man by 20%"

Ellen (convenor): "When he's talking about moving these setters off and putting them elsewhere - If he tries to do this they're going to crib...."

Mary West : (branch secretary) "Well, they'll just have to move. We've got movement of labour - "

Terry (maintenance shopsteward) "But they were taken on as moulding setters..."

Mary: "We'd have to come to some arrangement, we can't have 16 men standing around with no work!"

Paul: "I'm not agreeing to any movement until the matter is discussed by the men - only if the members agree...."

Ellen: "They'll throw the lot out - they'll want to know where they're going to be moved too and everything else....."

(Field notes 192-193/16.3)

Negotiations on the toolroom workers' demand for staff status were conducted in a quite particular way. The formal request for parity with development engineers (on staff) was treated perfunctorily, with the industrial relations director responding that in the first place, manual workers would be no better off since staff did not get overtime

pay and in the second place, it would not be allowed under pay policy anyway. What was really being negotiated here however was a request from the trade union official already presented in his opening address, to re-open discussions along the lines of those first held in 1974 - for a "special agreement" covering both groups of skilled men. (15) Since the Industrial Relations director had, as yet, no brief from the company Chairman on this matter the negotiations here were simply about placing the item on to a future agenda and a declaration on the union side of their preparedness to do so. (To the extent that we have argued that what is negotiated across the bargaining table is (already) the outcome of previous bargaining processes, we can see in the officials' 'preparedness' at this point the successful outcome of pressure from the skilled men on their negotiators to bargain on the issue)

The two discussions were deliberately run together, and, although the second was much more implicit than the first, it was picked up readily by the Industrial Relations director who was now coming under pressure (as was the union official) from three separate groups of skilled men. Vin however, responded more warily - it was not precisely what his members had asked for.

Tony Stuart: "Now that the company stands clear on the terms of reference, the matter stands in abeyance until we consider it....although I think we're talking on very dangerous territory if we go away thinking that if it does happen it'll only be for skilled men...."

Vin: "We're applying for it for toolmakers in any case...."

Tony: "But I have wider responsibilities. (to the union official) At some stage are you prepared to say it's for this group (the skilled) and this group only?"

Paul: I think we could be...I can't at present confirm.....

(Field notes 195/16.3)

In the following months, the two groups, maintenance and toolroom, continued to pursue their separate claims - separately. When the March 'Bonus strike' erupted two days after the above negotiations had taken place with the majority of women production workers at all four factories stopping work, the toolrooms continued to work normally and did so throughout all four days of protest action. And it would appear that most of the maintenance workers did so too. They had no need to join in or to lose any pay.

Throughout April, demands arising from the strike were negotiated. And, while the skilled men joined in discussions appertaining to these, their own disputes were progressed separately and not debated in the open forum.

The maintenance workers held several meetings in works' time and put together their own claim which was submitted to the company in the third week of April. Six weeks after producing a letter from David Lea of the TUC's Economic Department, preventing any further discussions concerning the future for the auto-shop, the regional official forwarded unofficially, the "maintenance men's detailed claim for the company's consideration , when the pay policy allows".

The toolroom workers continued to dispute the company's proposed holiday working arrangements even though these now incorporated the principal of staggered holidays for a trial period of two years. They refused to return to "normal working" until at least two of the clauses were satisfactorily resolved. One of these related to who should be included in the arrangements. Agreement was finally reached at the end of April (17), but not before twenty women on an assembly section had lost money as a result of their action. (While men in the toolroom continued to work overtime.)



#### REPRESENTATION AND CONTROL IN THE BARGAINING PROCESS

A major feature of the maintenance workers' dispute was the accompanying struggle over representation which was (like the auto-shop) an integral part of it. As we have already pointed out, representation is negotiated and the outcome reflects the balance between the bargaining strength and interests of management, the union (through the officials) and the different groups within the membership. The bargaining process involved is, therefore, fairly complex. Looking at two incidents involving maintenance workers we can, however, see that the battle to maintain control in this area centrally concerned the full-time officials - especially the branch secretary.

First we can note that the maintenance men, like those in the auto-shop, were looking to 'capture' representation at convenor level as a means of more effectively advancing their own interests.

Ellen had been convenor at Stourbridge from the beginning. She had maintained her position by firm individual 'rule' and the close support of a similarly long-standing clique of female shopstewards which she was in no hurry to see changed. There had been some dissatisfaction expressed by the membership over the way she had conducted the recent annual elections. Instead of handing round nomination forms as usual, incumbent stewards had gone round the members instead, asking them if they were satisfied that they should continue in office. And a ballot had only been held if the members had requested it.

Ellen was away on holiday when the 'bonus strike' occurred. One consequence of the resulting turmoil and general airing of dissatisfaction was a demand that she should be removed from office as convenor. The men immediately seized the opportunity and a petition demanding her

resignation awaited her return. The maintenance chargehand in the moulding department explained:

"I'm not all that popular down here - I'll be quite honest - with a lot of the shopstewards, I got the blame when Ellen the previous convenor stood down because it started on one of my sections - quality control actually. They sent out a Round Robin, or whatever you want to call it, and it was signed by hundreds of people and they said they wanted me for convenor. If - I s'pose if I was prepared to come off shifts I might have been convenor, but I wasn't prepared to come off shifts because I would lose too much money. But then, as I said to them, 'Fair enough, give us a chance we can talk it out with the management,' (because previous convenors hadn't been shift workers). And we talked it out but they (management) wanted me on days. And as I said at the time, I'm losing too much money, I've got a family to look after, to work days, I've got used to a certain rate of pay, a certain standard of living. The only way I can keep that is to stay shift-paid."

Terry (maintenance chargehand) (18)

A number of the older women had refused to sign the petition and, apart from the men, it was mainly the younger women who did so. At first Ellen refused to resign, saying that the convenor was elected by the stewards, not the membership. In the steward s' committee the vote of confidence went in her favour. But, because the membership complained, eight of the women stewards decided to stand for re-election on their sections, on the basis that, if elected, they would vote for Ellen again. But Ellen resigned (and not all of her supporters were re-elected either).

When management insisted that they wanted a day-worker (probably, neither they nor the officials were anxious to see the maintenance chargehand in such a powerful position), Terry stood down and Pearl was elected convenor with Gordon, the storeman who had represented the semi-skilled males in the 1974 wage negotiations, as her deputy. The skilled men were not happy with this. Questioning the 'fairness' of

having one male and one female, they argued for separate representation at this level for the skilled (even if this meant having two males in position) because they did not consider a male semi-skilled worker could represent their interests adequately. The question of separation and containment necessary for making sectional gains is probably relevant here. Indeed, Gordon had initially been instrumental in getting the skilled men's lieu-bonus 'generalised' to the semi-skilled males. (As part of a 'deal' to minimise gains to the women, The latter had had to go on strike against management and the officials to get some of this lieu-bonus for themselves). But, after twelve months when Gordon tried, and failed, himself to displace Pearl, Ernie, another maintenance steward, was elected as deputy. And he did eventually 'succeed' to the position of convenor.

At around the same time as Terry the chargehand in maintenance was making his bid for the convenorship at Stourbridge, there were also problems at the Old Hill factory. These took a slightly different form, which reveals rather more clearly perhaps, the complex of different interests involved in the question of control over representation.

The convenor of this factory was a woman, Irene. For a while her deputy had been Roy, the semi-skilled steward from the autoshop. She had found it difficult to work with him and so, prior to this study or either of the disputes described, he had been displaced by Jerry - a steward from the maintenance department (and therefore, in a skilled grade).

Surprisingly, two weeks after the skilled men at Stourbridge had attempted to put their representative into this position, the (20 or so) maintenance workers at Old Hill demanded that their steward should give up his post.

"The skilled men are always complaining they haven't got sufficient voice - so we got a rep. from the skilled to be deputy convenor. Now they've demanded he should give up his deputy convenorship... (And when he wouldn't) they asked for another shop-steward."

Irene (convenor, Old Hill) (19)

"The chaps have been asking him for things in the shop and he's been putting others' problems first - so they've been getting fed up."

Paul (maintenance) (20)

"Their argument is that they want someone up there all the time."

Jerry (maintenance, deputy convenor)

The contradiction revealed here is that, although these positions were desired because of the way they could be used to facilitate the advancement of sectional interests, they also required to some extent the representation of other interests as well. And in the Old Hill factory, the maintenance and toolroom workers were a relatively smaller grouping than they were at Stourbridge, so their representative as deputy convenor was always likely to be engaged on someone else's business (particularly the autoshop's).

When his constituents in the maintenance department complained about the quality of representation he afforded them, Jerry preferred to keep his position as deputy convenor and to look for another "less demanding" constituency elsewhere. This quite suited his department which was free to elect another representative while still retaining

access to the higher levels of negotiation which Jerry's continued occupation of the post provided. It also suited the convenor who preferred to keep her (rather passive) deputy as a bulwark against the continuous threats forthcoming from various other sections of male workers (particularly the autoshop) and so she set about finding him another section of workers he might represent.

As has been noted, control over representation was central to the bargaining process and all parties involved in the latter had an interest in it, although they used different means and had different resources at their disposal. The branch secretary was especially influential: maintaining as high a degree of control as possible over representation in all of the factories. (This appeared, in fact, to be a major function of her office) But it was a crucial area for the convenors too, and being closer to the constituencies in the workplace they were better able to influence how these were shaped, who should be nominated and when elections might be held. Finally, as this minor drama at Old Hill was played out, a number of other interests could be seen to have had an impact on its outcome - such as management's.

An early source of opposition to the proposed arrangements was the foreman who objected to having two men out of some 25-30 skilled (maintenance and toolroom) leaving their jobs to go onto union business. These arguments were readily picked up by the branch secretary, who further elaborated them along the lines of "fairness" of representation; although it was clear that the grounds for the official's opposition were rather more complex than this.

The precedent being claimed to legitimate Jerry's strategy was Terry at Stourbridge who had "found himself" a shopsteward's position by canvassing various groups who were effectively unrepresented. He had, in the process, sparked off demands from the workers concerned that they should have "their own steward".

As noted earlier, the pattern of representation is the outcome of (continuous) negotiation which is, in the first place, internal and inseparable from the bargaining which takes place on substantive issues. But representation is also a bargaining resource in its own right and happened to be the main one available to the officials. In order to use it as a means of control; of dispensing or withholding bargaining priority, as a bargaining counter vis a vis the membership and as a source of power because it was a resource which various groups required, the officials needed to have a degree of independent control - over both the areas represented and the individuals who were chosen to represent them. Both of these were threatened by initiatives like Terry's and the branch secretary was in no hurry to have this 'precedent' repeated (especially in view of the control problems already arising from this particular group of skilled men). As she pointed out to the convenor:

"There are many reasons why this sort of thing could backfire on us. For example, Ida....they might decide they want her - someone we didn't want at all. And they'd say - we insist..."

Mary (branch secretary) (21) my emphasis

Looking for a means of getting the company to make the decision they required the officials scrutinised the recognition agreement but found only that: "The number of Shop Representatives and their constituencies shall be mutually agreed between the full-time officials of the union....." (p.2. s.8). It said nothing about individuals being mutually agreed. As it happened, however, they did not have to wait long for alternative arguments with which to present their case to the company.

Within a week the autoshop stewards had raised strong objections to the idea that Jerry should have a new constituency in order to retain the deputy convenorship, and the branch secretary immediately penned the following letter to the Industrial Relations director:

"I am led to believe that the female supervision have accepted Jerry who previously represented the maintenance department to be their representative. I am sure that a representative from the maintenance department, now representing the female supervision would not be acceptable to the company. Therefore an early reply would be appreciated, as we are expecting repercussions from other areas."

(25.5.1977)

On the same day, Jerry was finally removed from office and Pat, the shopsteward representing women operatives in the autoshop, was elected deputy convenor in his place. Grasping the opportunity provided, the two male stewards from this department had tried, and failed again, to get a vote of no-confidence passed against the convenor at the same meeting.

#### INSIDE/OUTSIDE BARGAINING AND CONTROL

Failing to make headway in the promotion of their interests by capturing positions in the formal bargaining structure the maintenance workers had continued to generate the resources they needed to by-pass it. They did this by organising on a cross-factory basis. These activities were not easy to sustain from the workers' point of view. Moreover, they raised a number of control problems in relation to the formal structure. And we can look at both of these points, drawing on the experience of the toolroom workers as well.

Although the numbers involved in the staggered holidays dispute were relatively small, the geographical separation of the two main toolrooms made communication difficult and there were even greater problems attached to keeping in touch with the dozen or so toolmakers

working in the other three factories. For example, suspecting that "blacked" tools at Old Hill were being sent outside for repair, Vin found so much difficulty in contacting Irene (the convenor) that he finally had to relay a message via Mary West at the branch office. Similarly, when Mary visited the Stourbridge factory, Keith, the toolroom steward, made a point of enquiring about the toolmakers at Waterfall Lane and Garretts Lane. His previous point of contact had been a shopsteward, Brian (a tool-setter), whose accessibility had been much increased as a result of his occupying the post of deputy convenor at Garretts Lane, a position he had since resigned. The main concern of the Stourbridge steward was to find out if there were any signs of the company developing (alternative) toolrooms at either of the other two factories.

The difficulties illustrated here, which indicated the amount of time and energy involved simply in maintaining communications on matters essential to the conduct of their dispute, serves to highlight the potential and actual problems facing other groups of workers. Few shopfloor workers had comparable freedom of movement and access to the telephone. Indeed, as pointed out earlier, to the extent that the female production workers and their representatives (apart from the convenor) were tied to their jobs, they had far less scope to maintain the same degree of communication even between themselves. Beyond this, access to the telephone was extremely restricted. There was one public call-box in the factory at Stourbridge and at lunchtime even this was switched off.

The toolmakers faced fewer practical problems of this nature - although there were other obstacles to their communicating directly, at least between factories. Thus when Vin telephoned Keith to find out of any tools at the Stourbridge factory were being sent out for



repair, the call was put through to the foreman in the toolshop - who fetched Ellen, the convenor. "No shopsteward of mine receives 'phone calls, except through me!" Commenting on this 'control' the branch secretary observed:

"She's probably right really. I mean, otherwise they could get a couple of young ones in - they could stop the factory couldn't they? Without the convenor even knowing!" (22)

As we have seen in relation to the auto-shop the union officials continuously attempted as far as possible, to maintain control over bargaining by keeping the membership's activities within the formal structures of procedure and representation; while retaining the choice of going outside this themselves. Perhaps because they were aware that management would be more prepared to concede sectional demands to the 'tradesmen' and less liable to escalate any dispute, the officials were more prepared to 'allow' this group to move outside the formal bargaining channels. Despite the fact that this did still, to some extent, raise problems of control for themselves.

When in May, the foreman at Old Hill gave his permission for a meeting of the maintenance department there, the men at Stourbridge invited themselves along too. And from this time they decided to hold regular meetings involving the maintenance workers of all the factories together, in order to progress their claim.

As with the toolroom workers, the officials tolerated this organising outside of 'the normal channels' and the fact that the claim went against pay policy and TUC 'rulings' made it difficult to pursue 'officially' in any case. The negotiating officer was therefore widely quoted as having told maintenance workers "I'd rather you did things on your own - without me".

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But we can soon see how this policy of going 'outside' the system raised different problems of control. In the first place the officials were reliant on more voluntary methods of contact and reporting back. And secondly, open by-passing of the system threatened the whole institutional structure.

The original dispute over oiling and greasing was still being progressed formally (i.e. through procedure). The six weeks consultation period had come to an end and management had again tried to finish the Saturday morning overtime, since none of the "agreed" discussions on reduced manning had, in fact, taken place. Indeed, the men had voted firmly against accepting either manning or overtime cuts, but their representatives had failed to report this back, partly because they were refusing to work through the female convenor. Terry finally contacted the negotiating official directly, but not before a strike had been narrowly averted.

The officials tried to regain control by insisting on the use of procedure - in particular, to prevent the maintenance stewards meeting with management directly. But, as with the autoshop, we find that the full-time officers needed management's co-operation on this.

"Terry can go ahead and try to meet the company.  
If the Company refuses we can discuss it on Thursday.  
We don't want to give Terry the satisfaction of  
getting a meeting just like that."

Mary West (branch secretary) (23)

And indeed, in a telephone call to the branch office on the same day, Terry duly reported that when he had gone into meet management, "I was told I was out of procedure - so I can't get anywhere now - so it's put back into your's and Paul's lap at the moment." (24)

The officials were also, however, under increasing pressure to remain positively responsive to the men's demands in order to maintain their control - the option of closing down the dispute directly or indirectly 'losing' it (and the maintenance workers' claim) through inertia and delay appeared less and less feasible. An underlying reason was undoubtedly the way that proposals to force both the union and the company to skip stage II of the statutory incomes policy were being widely discussed by the male workers who, acting in the tradition of separate wage negotiations for the men alone, had not, at this time, enjoined their female colleagues. The issue seemed, therefore, set to split the workforce and the officials were forced to be more responsive to the men in dispute in order to head off their ultimate fear - that the men's demands for separate negotiations would culminate in mass resignations and an attempt to get another union in to represent them.

Overall it would seem that it is not so much the pressure which groups can exert within the organisational structures of the union at the workforce which are crucial, but their ability to operate outside these.

As a result of this pressure the officials were forced - if not to take up the particular issues in dispute, certainly to pay attention to the individuals and groups concerned - in order to preserve the 'formal' representational structures so central to overall membership control. The representatives of strong groups of male workers were thus officially recognised and - made shopstewards. And the more vociferous were rapidly 'promoted' into positions such as Chairperson (like Terry), put onto committees, negotiating teams etc.

One consequence of this kind of sponsorship was that, as we have already observed, male workers as a whole were markedly over-represented in the organisational structure and the bargaining machinery.

WHO BEARS THE COST? AND CONTROL IN THE BARGAINING PROCESS.

"Someone always suffers. That's how you  
get disputes to end isn't it?"  
Mary (branch secretary)

When the maintenance men stopped oiling and greasing in the moulding shop their action soon took effect. The control-arm machine broke down and others were soon likely to follow suit. Whether or to what extent the women operatives lost earnings as a result of the men's action is not recorded. A rare occasion when this was however, arose as a result of the toolmakers' 'blacking', in pursuance of their demand for staggered holidays.

Twenty girls in a section of sub-assembly had been short of work for a period and lost earnings of between £6 and £1.50, depending on their hours. The issue had been taken up through the procedure, eventually reaching the agenda for a stage 5 conference - which was unusual for a dispute specifically concerning women. (25)

At this conference the issue broadly under discussion was who should bear the costs of the dispute? And the negotiations which took place revealed some distinctive sets of interests in relation to this, which broadly centred around the question of control over and within the bargaining process. An outline is given here in order also to illustrate one aspect of the thesis that the distribution of costs is an integral element of collective bargaining, and, being subject to the pull of conflicting interests, the outcome is a negotiated one. In this particular example the costs were literally financial.

Attending the meeting were the officials, convenors and deputies, management and the shopsteward (Sally) representing the group of women concerned. As it happened, there was no-one from either of the main toolrooms present. They made their representations afterwards.

The grievance, as presented by the full-time regional officer, was that even though the company had made the women payments at minimum earnings level (which was less than £1 per hour) for the periods they were idle, the union's contention was that waiting time should have been paid instead: "We have no agreement to pay MEL". Also, the rate for the former was slightly higher - although the difference it would have made to the women's wage packet was small ranging from 30p to £1.50.

In his reply the Industrial Relations director pointed out that the women had really been "in a lay-off situation" and the company had been under no obligation to pay them anything at all under their agreements, because the loss of earnings had arisen as a result of an industrial dispute. The payment had been a "one-off", an "act of good faith". "Over the whole fourteen week period (of restricted working in the toolroom) I tried to avoid confrontation". In response to both the union official's reiterated opinion that the payment should have been waiting time, and the convenors' questions as to why alternative work had not been found (i.e. mobility of labour applied), he repeated that he would not establish the principle or precedent of "paying for a dispute".

Immediately on the adjournment the officials began to negotiate their own interests in the matter.

Paul Silver: "I'm dropping it. The company shouldn't have paid anything. It may well have been best to say - lay the girls off....we kept them on from day to day."

Male shopsteward: "Why couldn't they have used movement of labour? If they've no job, they should be found one."

Paul "No. The agreements don't apply. I'm not going to have it - for what's going to happen next time.

Sally (shopsteward) "But it's management isn't it? It's mismanagement...."

Mary West (branch secretary): "As a union official it's Paul's job to protect the earnings of those inside. If they'd said to the lads - you're laid off - first then there'd have been no work at all. Next time Paul should leave the area - until people ARE laid off. No-one realises what he does for them."

Pearl(convenor): "Send a box round the toolroom."

Paul "Good idea! Bring it up at branch."

Sally "They'd tell us to get stuffed.... What about the union paying....?"

Paul "70 men on strike - that's 50 pence each. One of the members should raise it."

Field notes 12.5.1977. My emphasis l/c original emphasis u/c  
underlined underlined  
Management, clearly knew the importance of maintaining the initiative in respect of escalating or containing disputes. On this occasion they had 'chosen' to bear some of the costs themselves and not to escalate the impact of the men's action. There were, of course, times when this could be used effectively to put pressure on groups in dispute - by causing other workers to be affected. Management's refusal to minimise the extent to which this had occurred any further left the question of its distribution to be negotiated internally.

The union officials were well aware also, of the importance of minimising pressure on themselves as negotiators - as often as possible making bargaining conditional upon normal working being resumed. They also had an interest, therefore, in the costs being borne internally within the workforce as a means of increasing the 'containment effect'. Rather than being deferred externally onto management or the union.

Finally, the men themselves had an interest in passing on the costs, and they were not happy with the outcome of this 'internal negotiation', which distributed a share back to them. They had had no presence at the meeting, but their feelings were expressed in a letter to the union

officials soon afterwards. It was written by Vin from the Portersfield toolroom. And, interestingly, it echoes the points made about "containment" above.

With reference to our brief conversation at the Branch meeting regarding women losing pay due to the toolroom men's dispute over holiday working. I would now register my disapproval(...) on the following points.

- (a) Firstly, the toolroom men settled their dispute for a lot less than required in order that women, through no fault of their own, were not laid off work.
- (b) The amount of money lost by the women is less, in most cases, than was lost by the toolroom men in a last attempt to save women being laid off work. My members lost £1.45p, Stourbridge lost money also.

I consider the statement that women lost money whilst toolroom men worked normal plus overtime to be grossly unfair. I feel that it's time that you understood what men lose because BSR have a dominantly high female labour force. These are as follows.

- (1) Full sick pay to skilled male workers could quite easily be achieved.
- (2) Votes on holidays, pay and, in fact, anything - is dominated by the female labour force of the BSR.

I could list more but will end now, just hoping you will understand my feelings throughout this letter.

A major and recurring complaint from the workers at BSR was that they could never stick together. They were always "at each others' throats", they were too divided and so on. It is argued here, that one reason for this may have been the exacerbation of interest divisions, which already existed in the workforce, as a result of continuously being forced to negotiate the distribution of "costs" arising from bargaining - either the process (e.g. disputes) or its substantive content (e.g. increased workload) among themselves. The case cited above is a small instance and one where the company had already accepted part of the (financial) costs themselves because of their earlier decision to keep a low profile on the dispute (and their agreement to negotiate the men's demands).



Nevertheless, the union officials' stance in blocking further distribution of cost 'upwards', in order to protect their own position as negotiators, switched the process of cost distribution down again, and the separate groups of workers were left to confront each other. This pattern could be seen continuously repeated in a great number of different contexts with, as we have suggested, divisive effects.

Conclusions - institutional and non-institutional bargaining resources.

Issues raised in these case studies touch on the complex relationship between institutional and non-institutional structures of organisation and bargaining. The division of labour in production, patterning relationships along technical/social/sexual lines shapes institutional relationships and is, in turn, shaped by them (26). Bargaining resources having both an institutional and a non-institutional basis, are unequally distributed - as the pattern of representation may reveal. We have been examining some of the processes (and consequences) underlying this.

We have seen how the distribution of reward or benefit in particular-being affected by the levels of bargaining, the channels of negotiation available and the positions of representatives and negotiators in the structure - resulted in these institutional features becoming as much the subject as the means of 'collective' bargaining ; i.e. members had to bargain for as well as with institutional resources.

It is not surprising to find, therefore, that the male workers in general, and certain groups in particular, having the greater non-institutional 'power' resources available (as well as more scope to use them) were able to dominate the union's domestic organisation. They were successful because and to the extent that they were able to

move outside the formal structures. As we have seen, the group of toolroom and maintenance workers were able to do this to a greater degree than the autoshop males, using their workgroup strength to force sufficient 'external' channels of bargaining to enable them to by-pass the domestic system when required. And also, most importantly as a result, to exert extra pressure on both union officials and management as a result. The autoshop men constantly attempted but were not able to sustain 'outside' organising to the same extent. Pushed back into the formal structures, they concentrated on using their 'bargaining strength' to attain positions of power and advantage within these. The women workers were pushed back in these competitive struggles within the formal system and did not have sufficient non-institutional bargaining resources to go 'outside' and exert pressure on the formal structures, apart from short periods in exceptional circumstances.

We would argue, in short, that workers' 'success' within the institutional structures of collective bargaining is dependent upon the degree to which they can operate outside them.

CHAPTER 15 CONTROL IN THE BARGAINING PROCESS : DISPUTING THE

DISTRIBUTION OF 'BENEFITS'.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) One aspect which certainly enhanced job security for the men was the fact that they monopolised the jobs for which training was required.

Apart from those jobs designated 'craft ' for which qualifications could be necessary, the company also provided its own training - in particular, of setters, who were the main source of recruitment into shopfloor management positions (where company-trained - and tied - men were preferred). There is no evidence that this training was ever made available to women.

Setters at BSR were graded as skilled. They were all male and had started as machine operators or labourers on the shopfloor. They were shown how to set up/adjust certain kinds of machinery - a process which apparently took no more than a couple of weeks. This group of workers were referred to as "BSR-trained". Although graded as "skilled" (setting was traditionally a 'tradesman's' work) their actual skills were highly specific to the company and not necessarily easily transferred. Apart from the large presses, many women operators felt they could have easily adjusted their own machines. While the "craftsmen" felt anxious about the differential which separated them from these "low-born" occupants of a skilled grade. This status was probably less due to technical skills involved than the fact that it was a spring-board to shopfloor management - setter-chargehand being the first step. One of the reasons given by management for the lack of women in their ranks was that shopfloor management had to be skilled. The decision to use more women supervisors in areas such as the final assembly lines thus put a few women into the skilled grade, but they did not have the opportunity to enter it in any other way.

- (2) "RP and IB offered to revert to status quo immediately, but on condition this was put into procedure. This was refused by our convenor most rudely....we take strong exception...." (CH)
- (3) The case for the women who had lost pay was treated less cursorily however. While the company were claiming that the women had "withdrawn their labour" as well, there was also some doubt as to whether - if there was no supervision present - the women would have been allowed to work the machinery. This argument was supported strongly by the male steward representing the setters.
- (4) Meanwhile, within the workers' ranks, the support of those who were (literally) bearing the cost of the dispute with nothing to gain from its outcome, had to be maintained. Hence the setters' concern - voiced by their steward: "that the company should at least try to find something for the women."

- (5) Apart from the question of access to higher bargaining levels, the convenor's position was especially important to the men in relation to the body of stewards as a whole because, despite the degree to which male workers were over-represented on the steward's body, they remained outnumbered.
- (6) Rather more of the office staff were in this position, because the company's sister-factory in East Kilbridge, as well as the firms' customers had different shut-down periods.
- (7) The 'catch' in the demand for staggered holidays from the worker's point of view (which was not, it would appear, explicitly discussed) was that by showing themselves willing and prepared to cover holiday - making colleagues, the toolmakers were admitting to the possibility that fewer men were, in fact, required to do the job - which management could later use against them.
- (8) The committee also included four other women who were not present.
- (9) Another example of the "double standards" being pointed out here occurred two weeks later when it was revealed that Vin had been to ACAS to inquire whether or not the toolroom workers were entitled to ask for more pay. This was on the grounds that, in respect of some tools they were working on, they were engaged on "new work". (He was told this was allowable. Under the pay policy - apart from "new work" - the only other "allowable area" was in respect of "schedule 11" claims). No critical comment at all was passed about this 'initiative'.
- (10) The Industrial relations director had himself once belonged to the skilled section of the AUEW.
- (11) From management's point of view the main danger-area for generalisation of this demand was on the staff side where a considerable number already worked through the stop-weeks of necessity, causing much dissatisfaction among the rest, whose holidays were tied along with the production workers. The staff had been unionised more recently than the manual workers and the MATSA official, who was now looking for a 100% membership agreement, needed some "gains" with which to recruit more of them. Over and above this, both he and the negotiating official for the manual side were leading contenders for the forthcoming regional secretaryship. As the Industrial relations director pointed out - the competitive edge this lent to their bargaining had been causing the company a few headaches. It certainly made it less likely that this demand could be contained.
- (12) This is not say they were not implicated in more general (to the men that is) issues such as 'the male wage claim' and holiday pay at average earnings.

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- (13) In the second week of May convenors and deputies met the Industrial relations director plus another general manager for "informal discussions" in an attempt (by the Industrial relations director and union officials) to reduce the build-up of grievances at stage 5. It was not supposed to be a "negotiating session" - although it was referred to as 'stage 4½'.
- (14) Ref TM 11/S2 : 489.
- (15) In 1974 negotiations had opened on a maintenance agreement, the company being prepared to consider a variety of improvements in terms and conditions in return for rationalised working on the maintenance side. The matter had been dropped when, at the time, the men decided not to pursue it further.
- (16) Discussing the situation at the end of the first day, the union official observed that it had been a difficult year, industrial action being started by skilled men everywhere. Apart from the British Leyland toolmakers, he had skilled men on overtime bans and work to rule in numerous factories himself. "But why, today were the majority of the skilled men working?" The Industrial relations director asked - but no-one replied. (Field notes 21.3/234).
- (17) "Toolroom storemen will be included in the above stated working agreement on the clear understanding that no other section or department will use their inclusion in this agreement as a reason to involve themselves."
- (18) Ref TM 22/ S3 : 483-507.
- (19) Ref IB, 18.5/324.
- (20) Ref PH, 16.5/314.
- (21) Ref 18.5/326.
- (22) Ref PW 8.3/172.
- (23) Ref PW 17.5/320.
- (24) Ref Field notes 17.5/321.
- (25) See Chapter 12. One reason for this relatively unusual occurrence was undoubtedly the fact that there had been a change of convenor at Stourbridge. Pearl, new incumbent, had less inclination to keep her problems 'in-house'. And, certainly, fewer resources with which to attain or enforce their resolution at this level in the same way that Ellen, the previous convenor, would have done.
- (26) See Rubery (1978) and Stone (1975).

Conclusions: The impact of inequality in collective bargaining relationships.

We have attempted to utilise the basic approach and concepts, set out in the first part of this thesis, in order to analyse the data collected in our study of workplace trade unionism and to explain the findings.

Since we have already summarised our argument and conclusions at the beginning and end of each chapter, a detailed resumé is not reproduced again here. Instead we give an overall view of what has been covered in this study and take up briefly one or two questions with policy implications arising from our research.

In the course of our investigation into the position of women in the union, we have taken seriously the proposition noted in our introduction that "the world of social production (must be) investigated as a source of divisions and inequalities among the working class". Exploring in Part Two how this was structured by (and structured) the sexual division of labour, we have pursued the implications of this for patterns of trade union organisation and collective bargaining in Part Three. In doing so, we have found it necessary to consider the relationship between institutional and non-institutional sources and forms of regulation in employment and to evaluate the full scope of (sexually differentiated) interests, relationships and processes involved in collective bargaining.

We have argued that collective bargaining involves costs as well as benefits for workers and that the process involves the distribution of these among workers as well as between them and employers. The distribution of costs and benefits in both respects is unequal and we have been particularly concerned to examine the implications of this.

In the first place, to the extent that the employer's interests are distributed as costs 'downwards' onto the labour force in general -

and the female sections in particular-we have noted a double impact. First the representational structures are rendered less responsive to the members needs/demands, and secondly the bargaining position of the workers is, at the same time, weakened as a result of cost absorption. In the second place, to the extent that the unequal distribution of reward or benefit engenders internally competitive struggles, we can see the outcome in the way the trade union's organisational structures reproduce (as both reflection and reinforcement) prevailing power relationships in the labour process and in wider society. Thus we have noted that the resulting male domination of the overall structures - as far as the female membership is concerned - also has a double effect. First in further diminishing the organisation's responsiveness to the women's interests; and secondly, further weakening their position by ensuring that it is women workers who bear the main impact of any costs.

If we examine the consequences of the two sets of unequal relationships (worker/employer, women/men) together, we can identify a number of important implications for trade union organisation and structure in general and the female membership in particular.

In so far as the union's representational system is rendered unresponsive to the workers interests generally, groups in a stronger bargaining position are likely to be forced to go 'outside' and to bypass it. And to that extent, the growth of 'sectionalism' can be seen as a consequence of the employer's domination, (which is also facilitated by their greater willingness to concede 'benefits' on a limited basis).

But we have noted some of the consequences of this process for the 'weaker' groups, and their position may well be further undermined as a result of the stronger groups' domination of the bargaining



structures. And also the separation and fragmentation within these - both of which allow these sectional gains to be made more easily at the expense of other workers (rather than the employer). The costs from the employer's point of view, are simply passed on downwards. The classic instance of this can be seen when the male workers bargain over extra "consumption" demands or "compensation", which is 'paid for' by speeding up the women. A process which is rendered all the more likely in the light of union bargaining structures and policies which follow the employer's preference and 'favour' compensatory rather than production demands.

As a consequence of this double impact of collective bargaining on the institutional structures and the position of groups within these - the problems of reversing the pattern of distribution without deliberate intervention in the institutional structures and processes are obvious. Those groups requiring the greatest degree of bargaining strength are those that are most likely to have their resources undermined - unless conscious efforts can be made to avoid this.

Beyond this 'in-built' process of reinforcing inequality in respect of specific groups of workers in the membership, we would maintain more generally that the impact of unequal collective bargaining serves to continuously generate 'anti-democratic' pressures within workers' organisations. And this is an aspect we might further explore.

We have already suggested that the greater the predominance of the employers' interest carried in joint bargaining, the greater the degree of interest differentiation occurring within the representational structure - and the less responsive this becomes from the point of view of the membership as a whole. In particular we have shown how the full-time officers representing the institution on the one hand and the membership on the other, and engaged in bargaining jointly with management - have a key mediating role which requires a high level of control within and over the domestic organisation. This is variable to

the extent that the greater the degree of inequality between the employer and the labour force, the greater the differentiation of interests loading the collective bargaining structures and the greater the measure of institutional control required to sustain the joint bargaining relationship. But as we have noted, the imposition of the employer's costs via the institutional process does not go forward without effect. It generates responses - grievances and demands - from the membership who attempt to use the same structures in order to re-distribute them within their own ranks and/or to shift them (back) onto the employer again.

Sectional gains or unequally distributed rewards likewise generate dissatisfaction and demands for parity from groups in the membership - such as the women workers - who attempt to use the bargaining structures available to effect their wider 'equalisation' and generalisation.

relationships  
As a result of both 'sets' of unequal bargaining/we can surmise there will be increasing pressure on the union machinery - from groups such as the women workers especially. In order to maintain the same pattern of distribution in the face of this, it becomes necessary to decrease further the responsiveness of the union structures to their demands, and to increase the degree of institutional control over both the structures and the (female) membership itself. We are thus proposing a theoretical link between the distribution of costs and benefits by collective bargaining, institutionalised on the fundamentally unstable basis of relationships structured along systematic lines of inequality, and the growth of bureaucratic control and processes of 'undemocracy' (as well as pressures for democracy) in trade unions.

This proposition is broader than (but linked to) our thesis concerned with explaining the position of women within these organisations and can be illustrated with reference to our case study:

UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION AND BUREAUCRATIC CONTROL AT BSR.

The desire of the employer for cheap labour on the one hand and the unequal bargaining relationships between the men and women workers at BSR on the other, had resulted in unequal pay deals for many years. And, as we have seen, the implementation of Equal Pay legislation at this company had failed (as in many others) to alter the basic inequality of distribution patterning wage awards in any fundamental way. The period had however been marked by an increase in wage militancy among women workers generally - and at BSR, the strike for the lieu bonus in 1976 was a dramatic expression of this.

The women workers' heightened awareness of inequality continued to generate militancy and a growing pressure on the union machinery - which reproduced the same pattern of distribution through collective bargaining, as it had done previously. This pressure was increased by the fact that as a result of the Equal Pay legislation the men could no longer negotiate separate wage claims. They were increasingly forced, as a result, to take part in more "internal" negotiations with the women workers on the shape of the union side's bargaining policy for all workers than they had ever done before. And the women were, thereby, better informed about their relative pay positions and prospects. But the male workers (especially certain skilled groups) still dominated these internal negotiations and struggled even harder to maintain the separation necessary to establish differentials in their favour. Thus we have seen that the toolroom and maintenance men held separate meetings, utilised separate channels of negotiation, controlled the bargaining agenda and dominated the process of internal bargaining which shaped the final pay "groupings" in the "craftsmen's" agreement, as well as the pattern of distribution (percentage payout) of the productivity deal.

What happened when the women attempted to use the union's representative machinery in order to change this pattern of distribution? Demanding a flat-rate payout across the board on the productivity deal, their branch decision had to be directly blocked, if the established (unequal) pattern was to be maintained. Moreover, to get the scheme accepted at all, the officials had found it necessary, as with the sick pay scheme, to keep strong control over information regarding negotiations and the deals as a whole. (This was facilitated by the impenetrable language of the Inbucon report).

We have already pointed out how information is a crucial bargaining resource and sectional (unequal) claims which require its limitation ultimately lead to a reduction in the amount and flow of information within the membership as a whole. Indeed, the maintenance of inequality was so dependent upon secrecy and the restriction of information in this domestic organisation that members were only permitted to see the page of the 'rate book' relevant to themselves.

The incident of the "holiday pay dispute" illustrates this process of information restriction "in action". It also provides a nice example of our thesis that the maintenance of unequal distribution through supposedly "special" bargaining structures generates a continuous process of 'undemocracy' and ultimately bureaucratic control, within this (or we would argue any other) form of organisation.

#### THE HOLIDAY PAY DISPUTE

"It's only 'a one off'. That's how they keep getting out of it - 'it's a one off'. But we always end up permanently 'one off', you know." Madge (Moulding Shop). (1)

Average earnings for holiday pay had been a long-standing demand of the male workers - especially those whose earnings contained a high proportion of shift/overtime premium pay. The company had

always refused this, paying out a sum calculated (with a 'plussage') on basic rates and the minimum earnings level. In many cases this gave the women holiday pay which was above their average earnings. But for shift and overtime workers it was always less.

The 'craftsmen' had included the demand in their claim which was conceded in 1978. The whole series of negotiations leading up to the agreement - with management over the restoration of differentials and between the different sections of the workforce over 'groupings' - had given the question of pay levels a high profile. (As we have seen, the 'craftsmen' had already been forced to justify their claims for special treatment to the female membership directly). And when the back-pay on the productivity deal - on which the women had refused to accept there was any justification for differentials - was paid out in a lump sum, the consequences, in money terms, were only too plain to see.

"You see, since then - the women have always ... Whatever happens - whatever payment or backpay, or anything that comes up now - say its done on a percentage basis... Well, obviously, if I earn £100 per week, and its 5%, then I get £5; and if the women earn £50 per week and its 5%, they get £2.50. But, ever since all this trouble with the craftsmen etc - and there's any payments put up on a sheet - you know: Craftsmen - the backpay for so and so is 'x' number of pounds. And then it comes down, and it comes down to the semi-skilled, and theirs is - I don't know - probably £10 difference, or something ... Oh, they create havoc! ... er, you know, you can understand it - I mean, a percentage is a percentage, and if you earn more money - its gotta be right you see. (You know ... its O.K. its money that we've been owed - on holidays or wage rises you see).

So, when we negotiate with Tony Stuart, he finds it difficult to understand ... I probably would if I was in his position. We say please don't put any figures on a piece of paper! you know ... just try and ... because at the end of the day, we don't want trouble willy-nilly - just for the sake of havin' trouble, do we like? And ... we have to ask him not to put sums on a ... 'cos a lot of our women get upset. They just look at the top one, and say - 'That's what we want! - you know. It gets a bit difficult." Ernie (Maintenance, deputy convenor) (2). My emphasis.

The old arguments justifying inequality, were beginning, it seems, to have lost their power. In Terry's view the women had been made "greedy":

(Do you think that trade unions do enough for women?)

"I think they've done quite well actually.

(In what particular respect?)

"Well, on this equal pay thing they've gone very well here. Extremely well. And to be honest, it seems to have made them very greedy now. That's my opinion yes. Whereas at one time they knew - well we've never been equal in rates of pay - this that and the other, (I'm not saying keep 'em down, because I think they should get the same - if they're doing the same job - they should get the same money. If the responsibility's there, then they get paid for the responsibility). But now, its gone - at this firm particularly. They're saying, 'well, we want the same as the maintenance men.' Those maintenance men are turning round and saying, 'I've served a 5 year apprenticeship I've given a lot of money to get this!' 'Oh, but we don't get it, we should get the same as you ... it's us who're producing the products'... This that and the other. And this has been said - 'we see you hanging round ...' And we say: 'Alright then, you don't see us hanging around at weekends when we've got all the work to do'.

They forget, if the place is moving smoothly and quietly, it means there's no maintenance to be done, it's been done - so unless I'm getting breakdowns..." Terry (Maintenance Chargehand) (3).

In June 1978 the company had conceded holiday pay at average earnings - calculated on the same basis as the 'groupings' in the 'craftsmen's agreement' - for the following year beginning in January 1979. When the September (1978) holiday came round, however, the male workers asked for the agreement to be brought forward to cover this week as well. (4)

The final arrangement was that the women would be paid the National Engineering Agreement's minimum earnings level of £61.25 - a sum slightly above their average earnings; while the men would be paid at the average earnings figure for their 'group'. The problem

was that for this purpose, one section - the semi-skilled servicemen - had managed to negotiate themselves into a higher category.

"The problem in September arose because the servicemen who are ALWAYS treated the same as the women on the lines, were paid £71 instead of £61.25 which the women got. They were put in a different group - all male semi-skilled, which included men who did do overtime - even though these servicemen don't. The women demanded equal rights." Ernie (Maintenance, Deputy convenor). (5)  
Emphasis in original.

Ernie had tried to explain to the women that they were not really worse off, and that they did not, in fact, want average earnings, because this would give them closer to £58 than the £61.25. And if all the semi-skilled men and women were to be put together in one group, they would all receive £61.78, 53p more for the women, but a drop for those semi-skilled men who did overtime.

"Now, they wouldn't have minded, say the guy in the stores or the ordinary labourer, getting more - what caused the aggro was that the old serviceman - who, you know is a good hard workin' guy - had always got the same as the women on the lines. But this time he'd been classed in with other people that brought him up - because they don't do overtime, these servicemen you see. But they'd been put in with another group of people as do do overtime - so consequently, it had brought them up." Ernie (Maintenance, deputy convenor) (6).

The servicemen had been paid £71; £10 more than the women. Ernie had tried to explain that the women would still not get the £71 if their pay was calculated on the same basis. But an alternative explanation which was also being proposed was that the Engineering Agreement minimum earnings level for the semi-skilled was due to be increased in January 1979 to £70 and the servicemen had been paid at this new rate early. In which case, of course, the women felt they should have been as well.

Whichever way it was argued, the result was the same. And the women felt the same way about it:

"Well it was never fully explained to us why and how they got it. So of course, the women up Old Hill said, 'We are semi-skilled the same as them, there is no 'men', there is no 'women' we are semi-skilled, and you owe us the £10. We want the back pay!'"

Nothing! And so the men are creeping away from the women. I mean, I know there should be no 'men' and 'women', we're 'semi-skilled' but when we're working here, we're still men and women - but ... there's a division coming which we didn't have before and this has caused a lot of the aggro, which makes the union work an awful lot ... I mean its alright if you can explain the reason why and understand it - even if its for or against - if you can understand it. But when you don't understand it and you have to try and explain it to your women, its bad." Madge (Moulding Shop) (7). Emphasis in original.

Some women members brought the matter up at the November branch meeting:

"Last week they were on about the holiday money, and it was all passed up there. Nothing's changed though".

(Do you think anything more will happen about that?)

"I think it will eventually get lost actually".

(Will the women bring it up again?)

"Well I don't know. The women, they're quite ... They want that £10 they're entitled to it. I think they're entitled to it. But I don't think the people higher up are going to give it to them".

(What do you think they can do about it, will your women stop work?)

"Well they've stopped work before and for less than that so ... they would stop work.

(Do you think they will over this?)

"I don't know really. Some's stronger than others. If they stop the rest have got no option really, because if they stop up the front the work stops going down so ...

(So at the moment it's in the officials' hands?)

"Yes, I think they're meeting about it ... Stage 6 I think.

Barbara (Final assembly) (8).



Nothing came of these discussions. And at Stourbridge the convenor and her deputy sat down to plan how they would publish the holiday pay rates for December. "We will have to be very careful how we go about it". They decided that the rate for each separate group would be printed on an individual page and the shop steward/s would only be allowed to see the one, relevant sheet.

Ernie  
(Deputy Convenor) "It's important not to let the wrong groups have the wrong info - as this only causes problems".

Pearl  
(Convenor) "Yes that's right. Look at the trouble we had on sub-plates that time. I was terrible".

Field notes : 23.11.78 (9)

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(Is the gap between men's and women's earnings getting wider?)

"Well, I haven't really got a man, like on the line - that I could sort of look this up. I only really know the women's money ... It wasn't very fair on the holiday pay - the semi-skilled men got more than the semi-skilled women, which wasn't fair, even under the Discrimination Act".

(How did they get away with that?)

"Well, I can't understand that either, because I mean, its gotta be agreement with the union and the management - so, one or the other isn't sticking up! I mean, somebody's got it wrong, so I don't know ... I don't know why it is.  
Edna (Final Assembly). (10). My emphasis.

"Holiday pay: Servicemen and Craftsmen getting more - that causes difficulties with the women you see. ENDLESSLY the women say, 'I can do their bloody job.' Which, as I said, I don't doubt it at all".  
Pip (Sub-assembly) (11). Emphasis in original.

This case illustrates, in respect of inequalities between workers, our proposition that the institutionalisation of unequal patterns of distribution in the representation and bargaining structures generates further demands and pressures within these. As a consequence, if organisational stability based on previously established distributional patterns is to be maintained, this must engender increasingly, the need to reduce bargaining resources (e.g. information) available to the

membership and increase the concentration of control within the upper layers of the organisational structure.

Countering this process of 'undemocracy' are members' activities aimed at rendering their organisations more responsive to their needs. We have noted how the women workers demands imply not only quantitative but, even more significantly, qualitative changes in the bargaining activity of trade unions. As waged and domestic workers women's demands raise questions which fundamentally challenge the structure of employment relationships, and control exercised within them. We have argued that it is not only necessary to recognise questions of domestic work and family responsibilities as priority areas for male and female trade unionists, but also to focus attention on the utilisation/exploitation of (especially women's) labour within the workplace.

At BSR we could see how closely the links were entwined: the women workers were recruited and penalised on the same basis - their domestic commitments. And their telling phrase "It's a woman's factory" contained within it a twofold demand: abolition of the punitive aspects (underpinning the rate of exploitation) in employment relations; and a positive orientation of these to accommodate social reproduction and human care. How will the unions respond to this demand in the future?

While our investigation, based on the study of a single workplace appears pessimistic, it would be unwise to generalise too widely in respect of the outcome. We have been concerned to explain the position of women in the union - their distinctive (and historically sustained) patterns of representation and involvement. And we have examined the dimensions of those relationships and processes, albeit in the context of a single firm, which might be seen as being

more widely operative and relevant. But the extent to which they are so, and the utility of our approach, will of course, have to be confirmed by further studies.

This is important not least because this study has served particularly to highlight the more problematic aspects of trade union organisation and collective bargaining from women workers' point of view. But in workplaces and in the unions generally, increasing numbers of both men and women are consciously taking steps in order to tackle these problems - attended with varying degrees of success.

This is true of the GMWU (now the GMBATU) in which has been established an equal opportunities structure of conferences and committees reaching from branch to national level. Experience of this has revealed the stubbornness of problems facing women members and shown the need to extend such positive action measures still further. And so in this union, along with others, the question of directly increasing the representation of women on decision-making bodies (by a system of reserved seats) is now being currently debated.

However we have shown where the roots of under-representation lie at workplace level. The problems run deep and it is true to say that here, in the way of direct intervention, less has been either attempted or achieved.

We can only argue that unless the 'processes' of inequality, however depressing, are fully understood they can hardly begin to be countered. And our study would seem to show that unless they are countered and deliberately so, little will be achieved. The implications of this research are therefore, that the principle of 'positive action' for women in trade unions (as well as outside them) will in the future have to take on dimensions at present hardly imagined. And we would

argue in any case that it is time to break the silence.

"The real difficulty lies in what is NOT said - in the silence on how women are to participate fully when they are still unequal as workers, unequal as trade unionists and unequal in political parties and organisations of the left". (12)

Footnotes

Conclusions: the impact of inequality in collective bargaining relationships.

- (1) MB 26/S3:190
- (2) EC vi/S1: 330-350
- (3) TM 21/S3: 445-469
- (4) This was conceded because the company had still not paid the wage rise agreed in June and the situation regarding back-pay was already getting complicated.
- (5) EC ii/S1: 97-110
- (6) EC ii/s1: 120
- (7) MB26/S3: 139-180
- (8) BB12/S1: 700-734
- (9) 23.11.78. D38
- (10) EW6b/S1: 362-377
- (11) PW 46/S4: 484
- (12) M. Barrett (1981) "Unity is Strength?" New Socialist September/October pp. 35-38.

# APPENDIX 1 : Blue Book Agreement

Agreement between BSR Limited (hereinafter called "the Company") and The General and Municipal Workers Union (hereinafter called "the Union") in respect of the Company's Factories at Monarch Works, Cradley Heath, Waterfall Lane, Cradley Heath and Wollaston, Stourbridge.

1. The Agreement applies to all hourly paid workers employed by the Company, both female and male, who are members of the Union.
2. It is the purpose of the Agreement to promote the mutual interests of the Company and the employees, to provide for the operation of the factory in the most efficient manner possible, together with established formal channels for joint consultation between the Company and its employees through Union representation.
3. The Company recognises the Union as the sole negotiating body for all employees referred to in (1) above.
4. The Company agrees to consult the representatives of the Union on matters related to local rates of pay and working conditions of the employees covered by this Agreement but once established by negotiation they will not be altered unless mutually agreed.
5. The Company shall, upon receipt of a signed authorisation card, deduct weekly from each employee to whom this Agreement applies, stipulated Union dues. The Company cannot undertake to collect arrears. Deductions of Union dues from the employees wages when authorised will only be made for weeks in respect of which insurance contributions are paid. All sums deducted shall be forwarded weekly. The Company agrees not to make any charge for administrative costs resulting from the deduction of Union dues during the period covered by the Agreement.
6. The Union shall indemnify the Company and its servants from and against any claims, suits, judgements, attachments and from all liability as a result of such deductions in accordance with the foregoing authorisation and the Union shall, on request by the Company, refund immediately to an employee from whom wrongful deduction was made.
7. The Company recognises the right of the employees to have an adequate number of representatives elected from the members of the Union employed in the factory to act on their behalf in accordance with the terms of this Agreement. These representatives shall be called "Shop Representatives".
8. The number of Shop Representatives and their constituencies shall be mutually agreed between the Company and the full time officials of the Union and these constituencies to remain unaltered for a minimum period of one year. Any alterations to constituencies to be agreed at January each year.
9. Employees who are at least 18 years of age and have had at least one year's continuous service with the Company immediately prior to election, shall be eligible to act as Shop Representatives. Exceptions to this rule may only be made to meet special and unusual circumstances by mutual agreement between the Company and full time officials of the Union.
10. Every employee who is a member of the Union shall have the right to record a vote in his or her own constituency. The voting register shall be the payroll at the date of the election.

11. The Management of the Company in consultation with the Union, shall appoint a Returning Officer and shall make such arrangements as may be necessary for holding elections. All ballots shall be secret.

12. The names and locations of Shop Representatives shall be notified in writing by the Union to the Company, who shall acknowledge receipt of the notification. Each Shop Representative must undertake to accept responsibility for carrying out his or her duties in accordance with the principles and procedures defined in the Agreement and shall accept personal responsibility for ensuring to the best of his or her ability that his or her constituents comply with the Agreement.

13. Both the Company and the Union recognise that negotiations require experienced representatives; hence both the Union and the Company will provide separately and together such training of selected personnel as is considered necessary. The duration of time for which Shop Representatives are away from their place of work undergoing such training shall be determined by agreement between the Company and full time officials of the Union.

14. Shop Representatives shall be able to leave their department in pursuance of Union duties with prior permission of the Foreman or other Supervisor. Such permission shall not be unreasonably withheld. Reasonable facilities including such payments as may be agreed shall be afforded to Shop Representatives to carry out their functions within the framework of this Agreement.

15. Shop Representatives shall conform to the same working rules as their fellow workers.

16. The Shop Representatives shall elect one of their number to be the Chief Shop Representative and his or her name shall be advised to the Company in writing, who shall acknowledge receipt.

17. The following procedure shall be followed in order to deal with requests, complaints and disputes:

STAGE 1: Where any difference arises between the worker and the Company such difference will be discussed between the worker and the Foreman (or Forewoman where appropriate hereinafter). A decision must be reached within one day unless agreed by each side.

STAGE 2: Failing settlement, the employee shall then refer the difference to his or her particular Shop Representative who will consult with the Foreman of the section. An employee wishing to consult his or her Shop Representative during working hours shall first obtain permission from the Foreman and such permission shall not be withheld unreasonably. If a difference raised by one employee affects a group of employees in the same constituency, the Shop Representative may raise the matter as affecting the group. A decision must be made within twenty-four hours unless agreed by each side.

STAGE 3: Failing settlement, the Shop Representative and the Foreman shall then discuss it with the Departmental Head. A decision must be made within one working day unless agreed by each side.

STAGE 4: Failing settlement, the difference will then be discussed by the Foreman and the Shop Representative with the Works Manager and the Chief Shop Representative. The Chief Shop Representative may, at this stage, raise the matter as affecting a group of employees in more than one department if this should be the case. A decision must be made within three working days unless agreed by each side.

STAGE 5: Failing settlement of matters raised in the above procedure, the difference will then be put before senior representatives of the Company and full time Trade Union officials with the Chief Shop Representative plus Shop Representative(s) of the department(s) concerned.

STAGE 6: Failing settlement, the difference will then be put before the Managing Director of the Company and a National Officer of the Union after which the question may, by joint agreement, be submitted to the Department of Employment for reference to the Industrial Court, or alternatively to any other form of arbitration agreed by both sides.

18. It is agreed between the Company and the Union that every effort will be made by all concerned to reach a settlement at the earliest stage possible in the above procedure and until that procedure has been exhausted there shall be no lockout, withdrawal of labour, go slow, work to rule, overtime ban or any other action which would interfere with, or prevent normal working.

19. A Joint Works Committee (hereinafter called "the Committee") shall be established, composed of not more than seven members elected annually by the Shop Representatives and not more than an equal number nominated by the Company one of whom shall be the Chairman. Each side shall appoint a Secretary.

20. The Joint Works Committee shall provide for consultation between Management and employees.

21. Should the Committee have for consideration any matter solely concerning a department or departments having no direct representation on the Committee, both sides shall have the right to co-opt members concerned with the matter under discussion.

22. The Committee shall meet once a month, or in special circumstances at the request of either side.

23. Either side may place items on the Agenda which must be issued together with notice of the meeting at least three clear working days in advance.

24. The Minutes shall be agreed by the Secretaries of the two sides and shall be distributed to members of the Committee.

25. Both the Company and the Union subscribe to a policy of increasing production and operating efficiency. To achieve this end the Company will be free to introduce method improvements and new equipment but will consult with the Union as regards payment to be made to employees arising therefrom, and to decide whether or not work should be done within or sub-contracted outside the factory. Due to the large number of female employees and the type of work carried out in the factories, the work force has to be balanced in all sections each morning. The Union recognises that flexibility, interchangeability and mobility of labour within the factory are essential for its prosperity and to ensure continuity of production.

26. Where serious breakdowns occur, emergency shifts shall be introduced by drawing personnel, with their agreement, from any department to ensure continuity of production. In addition, in exceptional circumstances the practice of Supervisors setting tools meets with the approval of the Union as does Production Engineers having practical contact with the shop floor in as much as that they will be able to make adjustments in production set-ups whenever they are required to do so. There shall be no change in the Company's present practice of training setters unless mutually agreed.

27. Recruitment of all employees, promotions, appointments, transfers and dismissals of Supervisors or Staff will be at the sole discretion of Management.

28. A Company Rule Book has been mutually agreed by the Company and the Union. Every employee must agree to abide by the works rules when they are accepted as employees by the Company. New employees at the time of their appointment will be provided with a copy of this Company Rule Book.

29. The Company acknowledge the right of the Union to pursue the principles of one hundred per cent Trade Unionism as distinct from the principles of the closed shop.

30. A disciplinary procedure has been introduced, the purpose of which is to protect the interests and safety of the employee and the Company in a just manner. It is, therefore, essential that employees should be aware of and abide by the following rules and standards of work and the procedure to be followed when such standards are not observed.

(a) Action Constituting a Hazard:

In those cases in which the action of the employee constitutes a hazard, either to the employee, or to other people (for example, removing a safety guard, drunkenness, fighting, or smoking in a prohibited area) the Foreman will instruct the employee to leave his or her work place until action is taken by the Departmental Manager. In certain circumstances it may be necessary for the employee to await the commencement of the next shift. The above type of action is regarded as examples of serious misconduct and would normally warrant instant dismissal.

(b) Action Not Constituting a Hazard:

The Company would regard the following as examples of actions not constituting a hazard but serious enough to be liable to unpaid suspension or dismissal after investigation:—

- (i) Theft
- (ii) Falsifying documents
- (iii) False booking (Management reserve the right to conduct checks on individual and group bookings, without prior notice)
- (iv) Sleeping on duty
- (v) Unauthorised absence
- (vi) Refusal to obey a reasonable instruction
- (vii) Or those actions constituting a criminal offence
- (viii) Damage through negligence.

Employees are reminded the aforementioned are examples only and it is not intended to be a complete list.

If the finding by Management should recommend dismissal a two day unpaid suspension should precede this, in which time the proposals could be discussed with the Union.

The Foreman will report the matter to the Departmental Manager who will, thereupon, hold an enquiry into the matter and consult with the Personnel Department. The findings and the proposed action will be communicated to the employee in the presence of the Foreman and the Shop Representative.

(c) Performance and Conduct:

In the normal course of their duties Foremen are expected to make employees aware of shortcomings such as:—

- (i) Output performance
- (ii) Conduct
- (iii) Absenteeism and bad timekeeping (the latter includes clocking in punctually by the recognised shift starting time and clocking out not before the recognised shift finishing time).

Employees are reminded the above are examples only and not intended to be sole reasons for disciplinary actions.

In cases of persistently poor performance or conduct, absenteeism and bad timekeeping, the following formal procedure shall be used:—

(A) The Foreman will tell the employee that he is dissatisfied with his or her performance or conduct, absenteeism or bad timekeeping, giving reasons and warning him or her, orally, that there must be an improvement, indicating the specific areas for improvement. The Shop Representative will be present as a witness to the warning and this fact, together with details of the warning, will be noted on the employee's record. The employee should sign the entry on his or her record.

(B) After such recorded warning and if there is still no improvement, the Foreman will report the matter to his Departmental Manager, with recommendations as to future action. The Departmental Manager will interview those concerned. If the Departmental Manager is satisfied that such action is warranted, he will issue a final warning to the employee, in the presence of the Foreman and Shop Representative, indicating the likely penalty for failure to improve. A copy of the final warning, on a standard form, will be issued to the employee and a copy will be lodged with the employee's record.

(C) If there continues to be no improvement, the Foreman will report the matter to his Departmental Manager, who, after due investigation and consultation with the Personnel Department will decide whether suspension or dismissal is warranted. The Departmental Manager's action and the reasons for it, will be communicated to the employee in the presence of the Foreman and the Shop Representative. In the case of suspension the employee's record must be so endorsed. Where suspension has not effected an improvement dismissal must follow, after the procedure in this sub-paragraph has been once repeated.

In all cases in which a warning has been recorded, subsequent completion by the employee of each period of six months satisfactory service or service without further offence, will qualify for the deletion of one such warning.

31. (i) The provisions of the Contracts of Employment Act, 1972 shall apply when the employment of an employee who has been continuously employed by the Company for thirteen weeks or more is terminated for reasons other than misconduct (e.g., redundancy, or the employee wishes to leave). This means that after thirteen weeks service the minimum notice of dismissal shall be one week except as provided for in paragraph (ii) of this Article.

(ii) Subject to the provisions of the agreed disciplinary procedure as laid down in paragraph (30) above the Company is entitled to suspend an employee from work, without payment, for up to three days for misconduct and to dismiss him or her instantly, without payment, if the nature of the misconduct is deemed to warrant such action.

Any employee suspended shall forfeit all rights to payment under this Agreement for the period of suspension. Employees dismissed for misconduct shall not be entitled to any payment in lieu of notice.

32. Overtime and the method of its operation will be at the sole discretion of the Company but the Management of the Company will consult with the sectional Shop Representative as to its allocation over the employees to ensure fair and reasonable distribution.

Employees are reminded that in certain cases overtime may be necessary. However, in all cases domestic circumstances would be given sympathetic consideration.

33. Management will consult with the Union whether or not a particular job is suitable for bonus application but the final decision will rest with the Management.

34. It is understood that the Company will continue to exercise the regular customary functions of Management including the extension, limitation, curtailment or cessation of operations and the right to reprimand, demote or discharge an employee for just cause.

35. It is recognised that the functions of the Union are to represent those employees of the Company who are covered by this Agreement on matters pertaining to rates of pay and conditions of employment and in matters in dispute on these subjects will be handled in accordance with the procedures set forth in this Agreement.

36. It is agreed that neither the Company nor the Union will subscribe to the use of restrictive practices. It is agreed by both the Company and the Union that every effort will be made to ensure the continued prosperity of the Company and its employees.

37. The Company will not order a lock out and the Union or their representatives will not instruct their members to cease work and will not encourage their members to take, or support their members in taking, individual action until the agreed procedure for settling disputes has been exhausted.

38. The Company and the Union mutually agree to support the use of all safety devices provided and to co-operate fully in the elimination of all industrial accidents.

39. It is understood and mutually agreed between the Company and the Union that the provisions of this Agreement shall be at all times subject to regulations at present enacted or adopted or which hereafter shall be enacted or adopted by a Minister of the Crown or Department of Government having jurisdiction in the subject matter of this Agreement.

40. First amended Agreement. Both the Company and the Union recognise that the Agreement may not cover all matters relating to their relationship but no change shall be made to the Agreement without the written consent of all parties. This Agreement shall remain in force for a period of twelve months from the first day of August, 1973, and shall be renewed automatically for further periods of twelve months unless notice of termination is given by either party in writing no less than thirty nor more than sixty days before its renewal or anniversary of the renewal date.

The above Agreement and all its clauses is not intended to be legally enforceable by either party but nevertheless both parties accept that they are honour bound to abide by it.

SIGNED FOR AND ON BEHALF OF  
BSR LIMITED

Chairman and Managing Director.  
(J. N. Ferguson)

Director.  
(G. Gater)

SIGNED FOR AND ON BEHALF OF  
THE GENERAL & MUNICIPAL  
WORKERS UNION

Regional Secretary.  
(J. C. Mason)

Regional Organiser  
(P. Smith)



## APPENDIX 2 : 'General Conditions Necessary for a Return to Work'

12. A disciplinary procedure will be drawn up to provide for actions constituting a hazard, poor performance, absenteeism, bad timekeeping and so forth within two weeks of an agreement being signed by Management and Union.
  13. The procedure for training of Setters will be the subject of future negotiation between the Company and the Union. Meantime the present arrangements will continue until varied by agreement. This will not apply to Toolmakers, Maintenance Fitters and Electricians.
  14. Apprentices will not be involved in any dispute which takes place between the Management and Union.
  15. Overtime and the method of its operation will be at the sole discretion of Management but Management will consult with the sectional Shop Steward as to its allocation over the employees to ensure fair and reasonable distribution.
  16. The employment of Old Age Pensioners shall be allowed to continue.
  17. The present practice of Supervisors, setting tools in exceptional circumstances will be allowed to continue and the arrangement of duties for personnel in the Press Shop will remain as it stands at the present.
  18. Production Engineers will continue to have direct and practical contact with the shop floor in as much that they will be able to make adjustments to production set-ups whenever they are required to do so. This would apply in the case of a Production Engineer being called in to investigate an existing but unsatisfactory production set-up as well as it also applying in the case where a Production Engineer would be experimenting with a new method.
  19. Neither the Company nor Union will subscribe to the use of restrictive practices.
  20. Management will consult with the Union whether or not a particular job is suitable for bonus application, but the final decision will rest with Management.
  21. It is acknowledged that Management have the right to decide whether or not work should be done within or sub-contracted outside the factory.
  22. Shop Stewards shall conform to the same working rules as their fellow workers.
  23. Management would like to have the views of the Union on the existing Apprentice Training Scheme.
  24. It is the policy of both Management and Union to further production efficiency by methods improvements and introduction of new equipment. New piece-work values for those improved methods will be negotiated between Management and Union.
  25. The Management will be interested to have the views of the Union in writing regarding the system for works pass-outs and will be agreeable to the establishment of a standing procedure for this matter.
  26. Three minutes time will be provided at the end of each shift so that each employee can prepare for departure from the factory.
  27. Weekly payment will be made on Friday afternoons and adequate time will be provided by the Management for employees to check the contents of their envelope and relay an queries to Wages Office.
  28. Management will consult with the Union should any redundancy of personnel be necessary.
- General Conditions necessary for a Return to Work**
1. The Company acknowledges the right of the Union to pursue the principle of 100 per cent trade unionism as distinct from the principle of the closed shop but both parties agree that there should be no victimisation. New employees will be informed at the time of their appointment of recognition of the Union.
  2. There shall be a resumption of all workers on Tuesday, 18th November, 1969, the Management endeavouring to place returning workers in their previous positions. Due to re-organisation of production, this may not be possible in all cases; however, alternative work will be made available.
  3. In the event of the restart requiring to be phased, the returning workers would receive their average earnings as and from the first day of the resumption for such time as employment is not available for them. The phasing period should not exceed four days after which all those who have not advised the Company of their intention to resume will be deemed to have terminated their employment.
  4. The appointment, dismissal or inter-departmental transfer of supervision and staff will be at the sole discretion of Management.
  5. Due to absenteeism, the work force has to be balanced in all sections each morning. This flexibility is essential to maintain production; where appropriate, pay is made up if a worker stands to lose on temporary transfers of this nature. The Union is in agreement with this procedure.
  6. Where serious breakdowns occur, emergency shifts are introduced by drawing personnel with their agreement from any department to ensure continuity of production. Emergency action of this type has the approval of the Union.
  7. Because of the nature of production, flexibility and mobility within the factory are essential for its prosperity. The Management and Union agree to maintain this policy of flexibility and mobility on the basis of joint consultation.
  8. On resumption of work, those firms who have suspended their supplies or service to the Company, will be instructed, where necessary, to recommence normal trading.
  9. The Management will agree to arrange for Wages Office to deduct Union dues from the pay of those employees who lodge a signed mandate form with the Administrative Manager.
  10. Recruitment of hourly paid employees will be at the sole discretion of Management.
  11. A Company rule book will be mutually agreed by the parties to this agreement as soon as possible after the present strike is settled. Every employee must agree to abide by the works rules when they are accepted as employees by the Company. Each employee will sign a receipt for these rules.

APPENDIX 3 : BSR PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH ABSENTEEISM.

The Company recognises that absenteeism may sometimes occur for quite genuine reasons, e.g. Bereavements, Weddings etc.,

It will be the responsibility of the individual employee to explain such absence to their Departmental Head within three days of the absence and in cases where the absence is not in any case covered by Medical Certificate. The department head may at his/her discretion decide that such absence shall not be taken in account of in connection with the Disciplinary Procedure outlined below.

In these cases, the Department Head should, upon receipt of a satisfactory explanation from the employee concerned, place a written note explaining the absence on the employees personal record, by passing the said note to the appropriate Personnel Department.

- 1) Any employee who is absent twice in a three week period without justifiable cause will be cautioned orally in the presence of his/her shop representative and the warning entered on the record card and endorsed by the employee and Shop Representative..
- 2) If the same employee absents him/herself for one further day without justifiable cause in the four weeks following the first caution they will be given a final warning by the departmental head in the presence of the foreman and shop representative, in writing on the form provided, and informed of the consequences should there be no improvement. A copy of the final warning handed to the employee will be attached to the employees record card.
- 3) Should the same employee be absent for one other day without justifiable cause in the following four week period, the employee will be suspended for two days and the employee advised of it in the presence of the foreman and shop representative. Full details will be entered on the employees record card.
- 4) If, after suspension the same employee be absent for one day in the following four week period appropriate disciplinary action will be decided, which could result in dismissal.
- 5) Should an employee complete a four week period after the first or second caution, wherein there is no further cause for complaint, he or she will have their previous caution deleted.
- 6) In after a further four week period there is no cause for complaint any remaining warnings will be deleted.

25th JUNE, 1976.

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT.

APPENDIX 4 : 1974 Wage Award

2nd May, 1974.

BSR MIDLANDS FACTORIES

FINAL OFFER BY MANAGEMENT TO THE GENERAL & MUNICIPAL  
WORKERS BRANCH TRADE UNION IN RESPECT OF TWELVE MONTHS  
COMMENCING 1ST JUNE 1974

Labour Breakdown

<u>MALES</u>	<u>Old Hill</u>	<u>Waterfall Lane</u>	<u>Stourbridge</u>	<u>Total</u>
Skilled	169	71	164	404
Semi Skilled	306	165	341	812
Youths	42	12	42	96
O.A.P. (Part time)	33 (17)	30 (15)	67 (33)	130 (65)
Equivalent F/T	534	263	580	1,377

N.B. Of the 812 Semi Skilled males 312 are piece-workers

<u>FEMALES</u>	<u>Old Hill</u>	<u>Waterfall Lane</u>	<u>Stourbridge</u>	<u>Total</u>
Full time	686	305	590	1,581
Part Time	1,605	879	2,838	5,322
Equivalent F/T	1,451	718	2,169	4,338
Juniors	104	37	121	262
Equivalent F/T ) plus Juniors )	1,555	755	2,290	4,600

Total number of equivalent full time employees male and female 5,977

TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTUAL WORKERS EMPLOYED

WOMEN	2,395	1,221	3,549	7,165
MEN	551	278	613	1,442
ALL	<u>2,946</u>	<u>1,499</u>	<u>4,162</u>	<u>8,607</u>

SUMMARY OF WAGE AWARD

(a) Female Adult F/T	£4.87 (including Equal Pay)
(b) Female Junior F/T	£3.97 (including Equal Pay)
(c) Male Skilled	£4.84 + 1/3 Shift Allowance of £1.61 where applicable + 1/2 Shift Allowance of £2.42 where applicable
(d) Male Semi-Skilled (Piecework)	£3.00 + 1/3 Shift Allowance of £1.00 where applicable + 1/2 Shift Allowance of £1.50 where applicable
(e) Male Semi-Skilled (Indirects)	£3.60 + 1/3 Shift Allowance of £1.20 where applicable
(f) Junior Males	£1.85
(g) O.A.P.	£2.25 - 1.15.

All the above rates are for full time operators and will be pro rata for part time operators.

SUMMARY OF TOTAL COST OF WAGE AWARD

Description	Total Cost per Week	Total Cost per Annum
Female Wage Award	£ 9,838.20	£ 511,586.40
Female Equal Pay Award	£12,549.89	£ 652,594.28
Female Conditions Allowance(Machine Shop)	£ 58.50	£ 3,042.00
Female Overtime	£ 687.74	£ 35,762.48
Male Overtime	£ 1,571.11	£ 81,697.98
Male Wage Award	£ 5,015.21	£ 260,790.92
Male Shift Allowance	£ 918.09	£ 47,740.68
Restructuring Payment	£ 54.25	£ 2,821.00
<b>Total Cost of Wage Award</b>	<b>£30,692.99</b>	<b>£1,596,035.74</b>

Total Wage Bill for year ended 31st March 1974 for Midlands Factories £7,292,252

Wage Award represents a 1.86% increase.

# DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE MALE WAGE AWARD

Male Skilled	This is based on 7% of average wage per 40 hrs	£2.39
Male Semi Skilled Direct (Pieceworkers)	Basic	£2.25
Male Semi Skilled Indirect (Survicemen, Stores etc.)	Basic	£2.25

Total wage bill for year ending 31st March, 1974 for the Midlands factories hourly paid employees £7,292,292

1% allowed flexibility margin	£72,922.92
Amount per week	£ 1,402.36
Less: Restructuring Payment	£ 54.25
Actual amount for redistribution	£ 1,318.11

## Balance of Basic increases for redistribution

Junior Females	262 x £0.96	£ 251.52
Junior Males	96 x £0.40	£ 38.40
Skilled Males	404 x £0.06	£ 24.24
Adult Females	4338 x £0.06	£ 260.28
Total from basics for redistribution		£ 574.44
Add balance from 1% flexibility		£ 1,318.11
Total for redistribution		£ 1,922.55

## Redistribution to Males

Male Skilled	£2.33 up to £4.84 = £2.51 x 404	£1,014.04
Male Semi skilled Direct	£2.25 up to £3.00 = £0.75 x 312	£ 234.00
Male semi skilled indirect	£2.25 up to £3.60 = £1.35 x 500	£ 675.00
Total redistributed		£1,923.04

## Male Award

Skilled	£2.33 plus £2.51 from flexibility etc.	£4.84
Semi skilled (direct)	£2.25 plus £0.75 from flexibility etc.	£3.00
Semi skilled (indirect)	£2.25 plus £1.35 from flexibility etc.	£3.60

It has been agreed to renegotiate male rates only on 2nd December, 1974.

### FEMALES EQUAL PAY

The Equal Pay Award for all females has been calculated in the following manner:

Male Piecework base rate	£24.20
Female Piecework base rate	£18.84
Differential	£ 5.36
Amount Allowed	£ 2.68

### SPECIFIED PARITY EQUAL PAY AWARDS

In addition to the general award of £2.68 made to all females, the Company agreed to make additional awards on parity. In bringing forward the balance of the Equal Pay Award these additional payments should be reduced by the amount brought forward.

However, the Company are prepared to still honour the original offer which was accepted on condition that the method used for calculating these payments is not used as an argument for making similar payments during the currency of this agreement.

Female Senior Chargehands to Male Senior Chargehands, an additional award of £1.60.

Female Chargehands to Male Chargehands an additional award of £1.37

Female Patrol Inspectors (Auto) to Male Inspectors Grade II an additional award of £0.53

The union also reserve the right to negotiate individuals or groups of females with regard to Equal Pay during the currency of the agreement.

Management also made the point that female inspectors, other than patrol and pieceworkers, would in future be compared with male viewers for the purpose of Equal Pay.

### Female operators Machine Shop

It was agreed to make the same "conditions allowance" to female operators in the Machine Shop that already exists in the Press Shop for females i.e. £0.10 per 8 hour shift. Pro rata for part time operators.

## ADDITIONAL GRADE RESTRUCTURING PAYMENTS

### MALE INSPECTION

A new technical grade to be formed with an additional payment of £0.50 on the Base Rate. A practical test will be given for qualification and periodically afterwards.

### BUILDERS (Bricklayers and Carpenters Only)

An additional £0.75 on the Base Rate towards reducing the differential with Maintenance.

### SKILLED MOTOR MECHANICS (Grade I and II)

An additional £0.75 on the Base Rate of Grade I and £0.50 on Grade II towards reducing the differential with Maintenance.

### HEAVY DRIVERS

An additional £0.50 on the Base Rate.

<u>COST:</u>	<u>Cost per week</u>	<u>Cost per Annum</u>
Inspection, an estimated 78 x £0.50	£39.00	£2,028.00
Builders 11 x £0.75	£ 8.25	£ 429.00
Motor Mechanics 2 x £0.75 + 3 x £0.50	£ 3.00	£ 156.00
Heavy Drivers 3 x £0.50	£ 4.00	£ 208.00
Restructuring Additional Cost	<u>£54.25</u>	<u>£2,821.00</u>

#### COST OF LIVING SAFEGUARD

The Company will make payments with effect from the first full pay period after the date of publication of the R.P.I. figure which is 7% above the base figure for the purpose of the arrangement and a pay increase of 40p a week will be given, with a further increase of 40p a week for every subsequent full 1% rise in excess of 7% in the R.P.I. during the currency of the arrangement.

Payments are treated as a special supplement on an individual basis and are not included in the base rate for overtime or any other premia.

Each payment of 40p a week is paid in full only to full time employees and part time employees are paid pro rata.

The conditions of this award are as laid down in full para. 176 of the Counter Inflation document 1973 No. 1785.

#### HOLIDAYS AND HOLIDAY PAY

The Union have the right to renegotiate both holidays and holiday pay during the currency of the agreement.

#### PENSION SCHEME

The planned Pension Scheme will come into effect from 1st January 1975 if approved by both the Union and all government departments involved.

#### SICKPAY SCHEME

The Company cannot agree to a Sick Pay scheme. Absenteeism during the past year has reached an all time high.

The Company does, however, agree that they may be approached again at a later date.

This agreement would also cancel any outstanding matters concerning established values, methods of payment, allowances for working conditions etc. that are in dispute at this time.



MALE SEMI SKILLED INDIRECTS

Chargahands General, Stores and Trained Servicemen

Inspection Grade II and Trainee

Quality Control Grade II and Trainee

Trainee Setters Press, Machine, Motor, Sub Assembly and Plastic

Guillotine operators

Storemen

Production and Warehouse Checkers

Production Control Chasers, Warehouse Outside Loaders

Stock Controller and Stock Recorders

Pollution Control

Factory Trainees not on Piecework

Transport Drivers

Labourers (Semi skilled)

Security

APPENDIX 5 : 1975 Wage Award

GENERAL AND MUNICIPAL WORKERS' UNION

09/BSR BRIERLEY HILL BRANCH

At a ballot held at BSR factory's on Friday, 13th. June, for ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION of the Company's offer the result was as follows:-

	<u>ACCEPTANCE</u>	<u>REJECTION</u>
SKILLED (Males)	81	288
SEMI/SKILLED (Males)	95	392
FEMALES	3295	841

16th. June, 1975.

**FINAL OFFER BY THE COMPANY TO THE G.M.W.U. FOR WAGES  
AND CONDITIONS IN THE MIDLANDS FACTORIES EFFECTIVE FOR  
TWELVE MONTHS**

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Wage Award - General Increase in Basic Rates

Skilled Males	£5.50
Semi-Skilled Males	£4.26
Females :	£5.05 (incl. £1.13 equal pay)

1. In addition to the above rates for males, a Lieu Bonus of £2.00 will be paid to ALL males, and will be applied thus.
  - (i) All male grades who at present have a Lieu Bonus will have this increased by £2.00
  - (ii) All male grades who at present do not have a Lieu Bonus e.g. shift workers, will have a £2.00 Lieu Bonus introduced.
2. The above lieu bonus for males is given on the following conditions.
  - (a) Rates, thus altered, will remain unchanged until 1st June, 1976.
  - (b) No claims under the Equal Pay Act will be submitted as a result of Para.1.
  - (c) No claim for consolidation of Lieu Bonus will be submitted or entertained.
  - (d) Lieu Bonus will only be used in Holiday Pay calculations for males when own rate is used as the basis for calculation.
3. From 1st January, 1976, £2.71 will be added to the female rates and this amount will meet the terms of the Equal Pay Act and will be the only amount paid to females, i.e. no other sum will be paid.
4. Any other direct equal pay situations will be identified between now and December 1975 and any necessary alterations made on 31st December, 1975.
5. Threshold payments will be consolidated for all females.
6. An additional £1.00 to Maintenance Fitters and Electricians will be given on the understanding that this group, and only this group, is accepted by the Negotiating Committee as a special case, and on the assurance that no further differential claims would be put forward using this £1.00 as justification.
7. All rates quoted above are for adult 40 hour employees. Junior employees will be paid the established differentials less than the above rates.
8. Part-time employees will be paid pro rata for hours worked.
9. a) The Company will give the Trade Union, in writing, its undertaking concerning a Shop Floor Pension Scheme.
  - b) When the Equal Pay Act takes its final effect on 29th December, 1975 thereafter there will be no barriers to women doing mens work or men doing womens work anywhere in any factory in the Midlands covered by the Agreement between the G.M.W.U. and BSR Limited.

10. Holiday Pay: Females: Basic rate + average performance of three factories, or MEL +  $\frac{1}{3}$  whichever is the greater.
- Male Semi-Skilled: Basic rate or Midlands factories average of MEL +  $\frac{1}{3}$ , whichever is greater (MEL +  $\frac{1}{3}$  = £43.16 to 24th November, 1975.
- Male Skilled: Own rate or MEL +  $\frac{1}{3}$ , whichever is greater.
1. All male timeworkers who are in receipt of a lieu bonus will have this used in the calculation of holiday credits when their own rate is used as Holiday Pay Rate.
2. Lieu Bonus will not be used in the calculation when MEL +  $\frac{1}{3}$  is used as Holiday Pay Rate.
11. Production Control Chasers (Grade 1) will be reclassified to the same rate as a Grade 2 Quality Control Engineer, this will mean a differential increase of £1.00.
12. A revised set of rules governing the qualifying days for payment of Statutory Holidays has been accepted on a trial basis.
13. All other wages and conditions, not modified by the above, remain unaltered.
14. These modifications will only be implemented when full acceptance is advised to the Company.
15. A brief illustration of the effect of the foregoing offers is as follows:

	Increase in Basic Rate	Lieu Bonus Males	Equal Pay Increment Women 1.1.76	Total	Shift Workers Premium Increase	Total
Skilled Male	5.50	2.00	Nil	7.50	1.10	9.33
Semi Skilled Male	4.26	2.00	Nil	6.26	1.42	7.68
Female	5.05	Nil	2.71	5.05	Nil	5.05
				7.76		7.76
				1. Jan		1. Jan

However, note must be made that maintenance fitters and electricians will receive an additional £1.00 or £1.33 on shifts.

16. In addition, the Company will introduce 5 day working for all employees as soon as possible to make up production losses during past few weeks from increased absenteeism and from reduced number of working days between now and the end of September arising from increased holidays. However, it must be clearly understood that this is not a result of higher demand and there is no guarantee that it will be extended beyond October of this year. Management will introduce evening shift work for ex-employees etc. as necessitated by production requirements. This will result in higher wages for female employees and probably more overtime for certain categories of male employees.

APPENDIX 6  
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SHOP-STEWARDS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to save more time at the interview for discussion, and for that reason, asks only for basic information such as dates which are not always easy to remember! Please try to fill it in as fully as you can — this would be a great help. Finally, I should like to say that the information given in this questionnaire will be treated in strictest confidence, and only used for the purposes of this research.

Jill Hardman  
University of Warwick

1. Name .....

2. Date of birth .....

3. Marital status

Please tick where appropriate

Single ...

Married ...

Separated ...

Divorced ...

Living with partner ...

4. Do you have any children? .....

If yes — please fill in details below:-

Name	Age	Tick if living at home

5. What is the total number in your household? ....

JOB HISTORY

6. How old were you when you left school? ..... years

7. Please give details of jobs full-time and part-time since leaving school and before joining B.S.R.

Dates		Name of Employer	Type of Manufacture or Service	Job		
Started	Finished			Duties	Hours per week	Average wage

WORKING AT B.S.R.

8. When did you first start work at B.S.R.? Date .....

9. If you have left then rejoined: Date left ..... Date rejoined .....

Details of present job:

10. Name of factory ..... Section/Dept. ....

11. Name of job or duties .....

12. Hours worked From ..... a.m./p.m. To ..... a.m./p.m.

13. Do you work overtime? Please tick where appropriate.

Yes : regularly

Yes : but not regularly

No

☐
☐
☐

... hours per week

14. What other jobs have you done at B.S.R. ?  
Please give details of jobs done for more than 1 month.

Dates		Factory	Section	Job
Started	Finished			

TRADE UNION

15. Had you ever been a member of a trade union before you came to B.S.R. ?  
If yes — please give details.

Name of Union	Dates		Positions held (if any) e.g. union office/shop stewards
	from	to	

16. When did you joint the G.M.W.U. ?      Date .....
17. When did you become a shop-steward at B.S.R. ?      Date .....
18. When did you become a convenor at B.S.R. ?      Date .....

Meetings and Committees

19. Please list below meetings of all types which you are supposed to attend. List all committees as separate meetings.

Name of meeting	How often held	Where held	Positions you hold (if any) e.g. Chairman, Secretary, etc.)

20. How many people do you represent as shop steward? Total Number .....

21. How many men? Total Number .....

22. How many women? Total Number .....

Training

23. Have you ever been on a shop-steward training course? .....  
If yes — please give details.

Where held	Dates		Type of Course
	from	to	



ACTIVITIES

24. Do you belong to any clubs, societies, local or national organisations? .....  
If yes — please list below:

25. Does your husband/wife belong to any clubs, societies, local or national organisations? .....  
If yes — please list below:

26. Since you left school, have you been on any full-time or part-time education or training courses (apart from shop-steward training)? .....  
If yes — please list

Type of course	Dates		Where held
	from	to	

Thank you very much for your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

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